

University of Latvia
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**DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS AT SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

**RAKSTĪŠANAS PRASMES ATTĪSTĪŠANA
VIDUSSKOLĀ**

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I hereby declare that this study is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged material from any source.

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ANOTĀCIJA

Šajā diplomdarbā aplūkotas rakstīšanas problēmas valodas mācīšanā, motivācijas nozīme un dažādu rakstīšanas metožu pielietojums. Kad skolēni mācās rakstīšanas prasmes, viņi iegūst arī zināšanas par valodas apguvi ar dažādu mācīšanas veidu un paņēmienu palīdzību.

Šī diplomdarba mērķis bija izpētīt problēmas rakstīšanā un noteikt efektīvus paņēmienus, kā ar daudzpusīgu mācīšanas un mācīšanās prasmju metožu palīdzību motivēt studentus rakstīšanai.

Lai izzinātu un analizētu visbiežāk sastopamās problēmas rakstīšanā, tika izvēlētas kvantitatīvās un kvalitatīvās pētīšanas metodes skolēnu zināšanu pilnveidošanai par eseju rakstīšanā nepieciešamajiem svarīgajiem paraugiem.

Skolēni veica uzdevumus rakstīšanas prasmes uzlabošanai: atbilstošu saistvārdu lietošanā, organizācijā, plānošanā un melnrakstu sagatavošanā, rakstot esejas vidusskolā.

Veiksmīga rakstīšana ir atkarīga no daudziem faktoriem: skolēnu motivācijas darbam, vārdu un saistvārdu zināšanas, rakstīšanas procesa sastāvdaļu organizācijas, labošanas ietekmes un skolēnu rakstīto darbu izvērtēšanas.

ABSTRACT

Problems of writing in the language learning, the role of motivation and use of different writing approaches have been inspected in the diploma paper. When students acquire writing skills, they also get the knowledge of language acquisition through different teaching ways and techniques.

The purpose of the present paper was to examine problems in writing and define the effective tools to motivate students in writing through diverse teaching and learning writing skills methods.

Quantitative and Qualitative methods of research were chosen to find out and analyse the common problems in writing for improving students' knowledge of necessary patterns which have importance in writing essays.

Students have done activities for improving writing skill: the appropriate use of linking words, organisation, planning and writing drafts in writing essays at secondary school.

Successful writing depends on many factors: students' motivation in work, the knowledge of vocabulary and linking words, organisation of subprocesses in writing process and effects of correction and evaluation of students' written work.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the role of writing skills has changed significantly. The author of the present paper who has been working as an English language teacher for ten years states that writing as a skill has become less popular not only in a foreign language, but also in a native language. As a result, it often affects the quality of written texts (reduces the effectiveness of written works) at school, especially at secondary school.

Students who are going to finish secondary school must be able to do some written tasks, but the quality of this work is often not enough evaluated.

One of the written tasks in the exam for 12th formers is writing an essay. Essay writing seems to be especially difficult for school students. Therefore, the author of the diploma paper decided to study the problems and difficulties of writing essays.

Moreover, writing skills are needed not only at school, but also in real life to be able to continue one's academic studies and at work.

Nowadays information technologies occupy a large place in teenagers' life as they spend a lot of time communicating over the Internet and writing short mobile phone messages. As a result, young people have often problems with the organisation of written texts, the range of vocabulary and grammar. The quality of their written work is becoming low, and their motivation and interest in the development of their writing skills is deteriorating as well.

The teacher's task is to help students improve their writing skills, and it is not only students' knowledge of grammar, organisation, vocabulary and context, but also cooperation between a student and the teacher, which is of great importance to prepare students for successful writing.

The goal of research is to develop writing skills at secondary school by use of different approaches focused on writing essays.

Therefore, the author of this diploma paper aims at finding out the ways of motivating learners to write and identifying the necessary linguistic tools and knowledge necessary for learners to improve their writing skills at secondary school.

The hypothesis of the diploma paper is as follows:

If students have the necessary knowledge about the patterns of organisation and characteristic linguistic features of essays, their motivation may increase, resulting in the development of their writing skills.

The author of the diploma paper suggests the following **enabling objectives**:

- to read and analyse the available theory on writing skills development;
- to research theories on motivation;
- to describe a few approaches to writing;
- to design research tools: questionnaires;
- to pilot the selected writing tasks;
- to analyse the obtained data and draw conclusions.

The first part of the diploma paper is a theoretical study of writing process, a view of some approaches which can be used in developing writing skills, description of problems in writing, differences between native and foreign languages, skills which writers need to develop, types of knowledge that writers imply, the role of motivation in writing skills development, description of essays.

The second part of the diploma paper is empirical, consisting of the description of the piloted tasks, the research methods, the analysis and interpretation of the obtained results.

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF WRITING PROCESS AND PRODUCT

It is widely believed that successful teaching and learning of writing skills depend on the knowledge of writing process and writing product. The aims, organisation and accuracy of language are important in developing writing skills. Therefore the description of writing as process and writing as product are described at the beginning of the diploma paper.

1.1. WRITING AS PROCESS

According to K. Chastain (1988: 244) “writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language”.

Writing is one of the productive skills where destination between writing process and writing product is matter of great importance. The teacher’s aim is to use knowledge of process and product in students’ writing skills development, especially at secondary school.

N. Flynn and R. Stainthorp (2006: 54) state “writing is an example of human information processing in action”. Students put their ideas and beliefs into writing and want to be understandable for those, who are going to read their written text. “It is a highly complex task that requires the orchestration of a number of different activities simultaneously and thereby places great demands on the cognitive system” (ibid.).

Many specialists: K.Chastain (1988), D.Byrne (1988), G. Fulcher (1997), A. Brookes and P. Grundy (1998) find important differences between writing as process and writing as product. Process of writing starts with the writer’s plan of work, choosing the audience who will read this work , their purpose of writing, choosing the kind of written work, producing thoughts, making necessary editing and producing the first draft. Later it can be rewritten and the writer makes some changes in the work.

Moreover, the parts of written work have to be connected by usage of linking words and paragraphs, which are understandable not only to writers, but to readers as well. However, T.Hedge (1988: 8) explains “successful writing depends on more than the ability to produce clear and correct sentences”. Developing writing is a long and creative process for writers,

improved by doing a variety of different tasks, for example writing comics, short stories, poems, small notes or messages greeting cards, formal and informal letters, essays, narratives and reports.

Stages of writing process have an interaction among them. I. Nation (2009: 114) divides writing process into seven “subprocesses”.

1. Organizing of the written work;
2. Choosing the audience, who is going to read this written work;
3. Working at producing ideas, which are going to be in this written work;
4. Organizing ideas of the written work;
5. Putting the ideas in the written work;
6. Rewriting the draft;
7. Editing necessary additions.

Writing process starts with the choice of the audience who is going to read, analysis and making feedback to this written work. T. Hedge (1988: 9) states “most of the writing we do in real life is written with a reader in mind- a friend, a relative, a colleague, an institution or a particular teacher”.

According to the audience of readers, there are many kinds of written work: letters, narratives, descriptions, essays and notes. Writing essays is the most difficult genre of writing where writing process should be well developed, especially at secondary school.

Gathering ideas is one of the most important “subprocesses” at the beginning of written work. I. Nation (2009) notes that there are three ways of grouping of ideas: brainstorming and “quickwriting” when the ideas are produced in a short period of time and spontaneously. The second group of ideas is based on questions: what, how, when, where, which help the writer to organize his written work in parts according to these questions. The last group of gathering ideas is the most difficult for writers and connected with collecting ideas and organizing them at the same time.

Next “subprocess” is connected with organising ideas in writing. The organisation of written work makes a piece of writing meaningful and valuable for both the writer and readers. Organisation of the ideas into connected paragraphs differentiates writers with similar ideas and makes their writing personal and unique.

Forthcoming “subprocess” forces writers to look back in reread their written work for correcting mistakes, editing or changing ideas or vocabulary and making their writing coherent. This “subprocess” is especially important when writer has difficulties in self evaluating and making changes in written work after this work is finished. Rereading and reviewing is closely connected with the last “subprocess”.

‘Editing involves going back over the writing and making changes to its organisation, style, grammatical and lexical correctness, and appropriateness’ (I. Nation, 2009: 120). These stages of additional work give students opportunity to improve their written work, to analyse the style of writing and correct it without teacher’s help at the beginning of written work. Written work should be discussed between the teacher and the writer, evaluated by the teacher and self-evaluated by the writer at the start of writing process. All “subprocesses” are focused on students’ writing development through doing many connected activities of the writing process. Therefore, the above mentioned stages should help the writer to improve his writing skill.

All these “subprocesses” of writing process are important and must be included in a written work. However, the use of these parts in a writing process does not follow in order. Sometimes the writer finds new ideas and additions during writing and improves the written text later. Traditionally, students have no time for making a draft and then a clear work because of lack of time, if the work is done at the lesson. Even when they write a work at home subsequently the written work can be improved, corrected or reproduced again.

To sum up, writing is a well- structured process which needs to be developed and discussed at the beginning of teaching and learning writing. ‘Writing is the result of a very complex, highly individualized process’ (Online 1). The right organisation of the writing process gives success in teaching and learning writing skills.

1.2. WRITING AS PRODUCT

D. Nunan (1995: 86) states “there is a perennial tension in most aspects of language learning and teaching between language as process and writing as product”. Writing as process emphasises seven “subprocesses”. Writing as product is based on some “skills” which are needed for beginning and developing writing process. Moreover, the quality and content of writing depends not only on process, but on product as well.

T. Hedge (1988) believes that the content of writing is closely connected with the relevant use of grammar. Secondly, the students being involved in writing should use the right and a wide range of vocabulary that depends on writers' level of studying. Thirdly, they must know the rules on which are based on punctuation symbols. Fourthly, there is a great importance of using layout in a correct way. Fifthly, previous parts of product writing, especially use of vocabulary predict spelling accuracy as well. Sixthly, writing base depends on the writer's knowledge of sentence structures. Finally, writing is fulfilled by linking words and clear usage of them; it makes written work more valuable and expressional.

When, students have knowledge of all the mentioned characteristics of writing product, they are ready for successful production. If their competence in writing product is insufficient, their writing becomes useless for themselves and for readers, as well.

Writing process and writing product are two different but correlated parts which make a sense in teaching and developing writing skills. The writing product should follow after the writing process and the result of the product depends on the effective organisation of the writing process and its stages.

CHAPTER II

MOTIVATION IN DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

It is widely believed that teaching writing is based on mechanisms of motivation and on learning at school and especially, learning a foreign language as a whole process. The role of motivation is an essential part of teaching and learning process, moreover, the knowledge of motivational strategies gives teachers opportunities to improve teaching and learning process, to discover new ways and methods of developing foreign language.

2.1. MOTIVATION IN LEARNING

K. Chastain (1988: 172) declares “teachers readily agree that positively motivated students are more pleasant to teach, prepare more carefully for class, participate more actively in class”. Positive motivation is one of the successful aspects in learning and teaching languages, especially foreign languages. Students’ motivation depends on their interests, needs, preferences and self confidence. The aspects of motivation, theories in motivation, students’ motivation improvement are the main reasons for teaching style development and enhancement.

Many specialists in teaching foreign languages: K. Chastain (1988), M. Williams (1999) and Z. Dornyei (2001) have worked at students’ motivation research at foreign language lessons. For example, K. Chastain (1988: 172) states “[...] when teachers talk about motivation, they are generally referring to students’ efforts to learn”. Writing for students should be an enjoyable and interesting task. First of all, teachers have to give students topics which interest students, are close to their real life, their culture and give opportunities to generate their own ideas and perspectives in a writing task. When students have interest in a topic, they are interested to work with it, when a topic is given without course book syllables, when it is not close to their real life and needs or it is chosen by the teacher’s personal interest, motivation in doing work on this topic will not be high and the results may be insufficient. Students’ motivation is grounded in clear instructions and presentation of the topic.

M. Williams (1999) puts stress on some other aspects of motivation which is always followed by students’ interests. The first aspect of motivation is students’ personal engagement in a task, then they decide to do or not to do the task and later they are interested in self evaluation

or teacher's comments about the results of work. M. Williams (1999: 5) states, "interest is likely to be aroused by the influence of other significant people such as peers, parents or teachers".

Moreover, there can be mentioned other factors that prepare students for successful work: classroom management, relations between peers and the teacher, methods and techniques are important as well.

The role of the teacher in students' motivation is important, significant and difficult.

S. McDonough (2007: 370) declares

"it involves providing a supportive and challenging learning environment, but also facilitating the challenging learning environment, but also facilitating the development of the learners' own motivational thinking beyond simply identifying their original orientation".

Teacher prepares students for learning foreign languages through many motivational strategies which would be described later but students' role in this stage is to accept or to decline them.

2.2. MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES IN TEACHING WRITING SKILLS

The previous description and justification of motivation in learning is important also in developing writing skills. It is widely believed that students have no interest in writing tasks in either: native or foreign languages, therefore, motivation in writing should be discussed deeply and the knowledge of motivational strategies should help students in their producing written work and the teacher in organisation teaching writing skills.

Furthermore, it is not the main reason why students are scared of writing, they sometimes have difficulties in doing writing tasks because their knowledge of writing organisation, grammar and vocabulary is insufficient for producing a piece of writing.

Firstly, success in writing process depends on organisation of work. It starts with the choice of topic, either it is mentioned in the content of Course Book, or it is chosen by students' interest.

Secondly, when presenting a topic, the teacher has to give in presentation of the topic clear instructions and explanations of the writing task which enable students to understand the organisation of the written work. Z. Dornyei (2001: 81) states "the best way to demonstrate

the necessary strategies and skills is to model them”. This modelling of skills can be successfully practiced at teaching writing skills. The students are to be introduced with the goal, the purpose and the plan of the written work.

Thirdly, the teacher’s role is to help students with appropriate vocabulary, if students have any difficulties, revise and explain grammar structures and tenses which are important in a particular task. This teacher’s ministrations motivates students to be active and ready for writing without fear and difficulties.

Fourthly, when writing is done, it must be evaluated not only with marks, but with descriptive analysis. I. Nation states (2009: 137) “positive feedback on the content of learners’ writing can do a lot to increase the amount of writing that learners do and to improve their attitude to writing”. After receiving feedback that can be done not only by the teacher, but by schoolmates, too, students may make some additional changes, correct their mistakes and style of their written work. Students should see the significance of rewriting their work.

N. Flynn and R. Stainthorp (2006: 59) state “a supportive social context with feedback on positive aspects of texts and strategies to help improve texts will enable children to have a positive motivation towards writing”.

Lastly, the effectiveness of learning a foreign language depends on the atmosphere in the classroom and relations between the teacher and students. Positive attitude to students and teacher’s interest in a task is a start for successful work and learning process. Therefore, when teachers have planned their work in developing writing skills they have to think about students’ motivation for doing the task and instruments which should be used to motivate students.

CHAPTER III

TEACHING WRITING SKILLS

Nowadays, problems concerned with teaching writing skills become pressing and important, because the quality of students' written work at state exams gets lower and writing seems to be difficult and less popular than other skills.

Therefore, to improve students' knowledge about writing as well as developing teaching writing, especially, at secondary school, it is essential to research differences between mother tongue and foreign language writing techniques, approaches and principles of teaching writing.

3.1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NATIVE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

According to D. Byrne, (1988: 4) "writing is a difficult activity for most people, both in mother tongue and in a foreign language". According to the mentioned author, there exist a number of problems in writing development known as cognitive, linguistic and psychological ones. D. Byrne (1988) compares speaking and writing skills and finds differences not only in practising these two skills, but in languages, as well.

Speaking is a natural skill for both native and for foreign language learning. Students have fewer difficulties in communication than in writing because while accomplishing the last one they have to produce their thoughts graphically and the aim of this activity is to make their writing piece understandable for them as well as for the readers.

Linguistic problems related with learning a foreign language appear in transmission our speech into written forms. D. Byrne (1988) states:

"In writing, [...] we have to keep the channel of communication open through our own efforts and to ensure, both through our choice of sentence structure and by the way our sentences are linked together and sequenced, that the text we produce can be interpreted on its own" (ibid).

Discussion of cognitive problems in writing is based on comparison speaking and writing processes. Speaking is a commonly used skill, and in native language it is widely practised as writing. D. Byrne (1988: 5) states "writing, [...], is learned through a process of instruction".

Therefore, teaching and learning foreign languages should be based on differences between native language (L1) and foreign language (L2). Language scientists D.Byrne (1988) J. Harmer (1998) and G.Fulcher (1997) have proved certain distinctions in teaching, learning and acquisition between L1 and L2. First of all students in L1 start writing earlier, at the age of five and seven while writing in L2 occurs later because students need to learn vocabulary, instructions and a system of making sentences. Another problem is that some children do not like writing since they do not understand the purpose of writing and the asset of its.

Students who are bad at writing in L1 may be not good at writing in L2. G.Fulcher (1997: 17) however, explains “[...] their lack of skill in L2 writing may be the result of their limited knowledge of the L2 code, not to problems with the writing process”. Moreover, writing in L2 is a more complicated process because students sometimes produce ideas in L1 and translate their ideas into L2 at the same time which is more difficult for them than writing in native language.

The previously the mentioned differences between native and foreign languages prove that the techniques in teaching writing in L2 are dissimilar from teaching writing in L1. G. Fulcher (1997: 18) suggests that teaching L2 “[...] teacher has to be even more versatile and adaptable than the L1 teacher in choice of teaching strategies and their adaptation to individuals”.

N. Flynn and R. Stainthorp (2006) have done research in teaching English according to differences between L1 and L2. “First language development occurs from the birth and largely in the home setting, whereas second language acquisition may happen at any time and probably in what is an unfamiliar setting”(2006: 70).

The process of L2 acquisition goes through a number of stages described by I. Siraj-Blatchford and P. Clarke in N. Flynn (2006) book “The Learning and Teaching of Reading and Writing” where the authors list the following stages:

1. Continued use of the home language in the new context;
2. Use of nonverbal communication;
3. A period of silence;
4. Use of repetition and language play;
5. Use of single words, formulate and routines;
6. Development of more complex English.

The recommended stages influence teaching written English and help language teachers to organize and intensify teaching process.

Moreover, N. Flynn and R. Stainthorp (2006) have elaborated a list of difficulties which L1 students may have in learning a foreign language. They combine differences in teaching and acquisition of two skills: reading and writing English in a foreign language.

Students may have difficulties in the understanding of language because some previously taught information can be unlearned. The difficulties in phonetics of native language and a foreign language: the distinction of written and spoken form makes a process of a foreign language acquisition more difficult and complicated. Furthermore, students should acquire the system of grammar which have many different patterns and may cause problems in learning a particular topic. Unfamiliar lexis does not let students read, speak or write fluently so they have to have important range of vocabulary for developing and acquisition learning skills.

Therefore, N. Flynn and R. Stainthorp (2006: 77) state “in order to write successfully, the child must have spoken vocabulary, an understanding of context, genre and appropriate tone, phonic knowledge for accurate spelling and have mastered the mechanics of pencil control and letter formation”.

Also, G. Bander R. (1978) has pointed out some differences in L1 and L2 teaching writing skills are connected with coherence. The differences in languages are not seen only in words and symbols; they are seen in the ways of formulating sentences, making a paragraph from sentences. Moreover, the process of thinking and producing ideas in the two codes are different, too. Therefore, R. Bander (1978: 3) states “these differences exist because each culture has its own special way of thinking”. Writing paragraphs in foreign languages has differences in construction. Teaching writing in English is based on rules which are important for the paragraph construction. Writing the paragraph starts with the main idea which is called a topic sentence and later it is developed accordingly to topic sentence. Editing new ideas in the paragraph should be connected with the main thought and preparation for next paragraphs. When students learn the rules of paragraph construction; they start to produce writing successfully.

Techniques teaching L1 and L2 are different thus techniques teaching L1 cannot be transferred to teaching L2 because of the differences between L1 and L2, methods of teaching languages as well as students' needs and problems in starting and developing writing skills.

3.2. TEACHING WRITING APPROACHES

There exist many various techniques in teaching writing skills that apply many different approaches or certain aspects of them. However, there are no clear decisions between language scientists concerning approaches and their suitability in teaching foreign languages. The choice of approach depends on the teacher, teaching style, students' level of knowledge and their needs. The aims of the approaches are various and sometimes teachers use not only one approach in a particular class, but a number of them.

A. Raimes (1983), J. Harmer (2004) and G. Fulcher (1997) present a range number of approaches and give explanations, implications and examples of developing writing skills through different approaches and techniques.

J. Harmer (2004: 78) states "an approach describes how language is used and how its constituent parts interlock- in other words it offers a model of language competence".

The Controlled-to-Free approach includes strict control in writing stages where the teacher is a guide in the writing process from the beginning till the end. D. Byrne (1988: 22) notes "this controlled-to-free approach was very much a product of the audio-lingual period, with its emphasis on step-by-step learning and formal correctness". Firstly, students start doing tasks connected with sentence structure: make a sentence of given words, change words, edit new ones and use linking words to make a sentence longer. Secondly, students work with building paragraphs with the offered sentences and, lastly, combine paragraphs in a written work.

This approach is based on copying sentences or paragraphs that helps students to make fewer mistakes or write without them. This process needs time and students start to write freely only when they have a high level of knowledge and writing proficiency.

The goals of practising this approach are following:

1. Students practise and learn grammar structures and the rules of making sentences, paragraphs and clear organisation of them in a written work.

2. Students get acknowledged with the elements of syntax, orthography and punctuation.
 3. Students do not have any difficulties with doing them writing task because their writing is controlled by the teacher and provided with necessary information.
- A. Raimes (1983: 7) states “this approach stresses [...]: grammar, syntax, and mechanics. It emphasises accuracy rather than fluency or originality”. However, according to this approach, students, who are unable to write independently, have an opportunity and support in producing a piece of writing according to this approach.

The Controlled-to- Free approach proposes activities that can be successfully used at the beginning of teaching writing skills, or with students with lower knowledge of writing skills. A. Raimes (1983) suggests several kinds of activities, which develop writing skills: controlled composition, guided composition, sentence combining, parallel writing, a question-and-answer controlled composition.

Controlled composition is supported with a passage where students are able to change time in sentences, some words, but they are not able to do any additions. Moreover, they do not think about producing any ideas, sentences or content of the composition and feel convenient, because they are free of stress and do not have to produce a whole written work, but only make some changes in a given passage.

A. Raimes (1983: 101) describes a question-and-answer controlled composition as “the type of controlled composition that uses a question and answer format that allows students a little more freedom in structuring sentences” For example, students write a composition by answering the offered questions. They need to produce sentences, but questions guide them in writing and help to make their writing coherent for themselves and their readers.

A guided composition is similar to a controlled composition since students are given a passage, to be used in their writing and several sentences which can be used at the beginning or the end of the composition, moreover, in addition, questions can be provided about the given topic.

Techniques, used in sentence combining activities are as important for both native speakers and as for foreigners. A. Raimes (1983: 107) states “researchers on writing for native speakers have found that sentence combining exercises improve students’ sentence structure, length of sentence and sentence variety”.

Students get knowledge about the structure of sentences during the practice, without teacher's long and sometimes difficult to understand explanations.

A parallel writing is an activity which gives students more freedom than the above described activities. A. Raimes (1983: 109) states " [...], students read and study a passage and then write their own on a similar theme, using as guide the vocabulary, sentence structure, cohesive devices, and organization of the model passage".

These activities help teachers to prepare students for successful writing starting from the beginners to advanced level students. The mentioned activities permit to develop writing skills for students, who are unskilled or have difficulties in writing.

Moreover, controlled-to-free approach gives students' priority to write without mistakes and strain.

The Free-Writing Approach

Difficulties in writing are caused due to fear and strain in putting on the paper one's own words and ideas. The insufficient practice of writing skills is one of the main problems in teaching writing. Therefore, A. Raimes (1983: 7) describes the free-approach goals as following: "Once ideas are down on the page, grammatically accuracy, organisation, and the rest will gradually follow".

Following the Free-Writing Approach suggested by A. Raimes (1983) students start their written work at the beginning of the class, the time limit for doing this task being selected by the teacher. They are not afraid of the content or mistakes, because writing will not be evaluated however, it can be commented by the teacher or read aloud, if students want to read their piece of writing.

As the result of this writing activity, students start to produce long written work avoiding errors and pauses; they feel comfortable and do not think about writing skill as a hard and long process of thinking and finding suitable words or phrases.

There are not many activities, to be mentioned in the free-writing approach, however, teachers can choose for students, writing several times about the same topic, or writing every day about the topic which students choose individually.

This approach is basically used for intermediate level students, who have sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The aim of free-writing approach is to develop

fluency but not to improve accuracy. The result of this approach may be seen after a long time of practising writing according to free-writing approach.

The Genre-Based Approach

The genre- based approach has great importance in developing writing skills.

P. Knapp and M. Watkins (2005: 8) suggest “genre-based curricula place a strong emphasis on an explicit teaching of grammar and text, and their widespread adoption in recent years is testament to their effectiveness in improving students’ literacy outcomes”.

Teaching students often follows with difficulties in writing the whole text. A. Firkins (1997) studies the importance of genre approach, especially in teaching students with low proficiency. A. Firkins (2007 :341) states “often, the teaching of English to low proficiency EFL students tends to be taught in a way that focuses on the sentence level and these learners often have minimal, if any, awareness at the level of complete texts”.

“The genre- based approach is based on a teaching learning cycle where strategies such as modelling texts are joint construction are promoted” (ibid.).

The teaching-learning cycle consists of three stages which can be presented in order or without it. The first stage starts with modelling a text. Students practice role plays, dialogues, interviews and preparation of the specific thing which is meaningful in a particular topic. The second stage of the teaching-learning style is connected with revision of vocabulary and grammar patterns. During the first stage students acquire a range of useful vocabulary, based on a specific topic and practice grammar structures.

The last stage is focused on presentation of writing. After the two previous stages students put the summarized information in the text.

As the advantages of the genre-based approach can be mentioned the following features: students get engaged in writing at the first stage of modelling a text by doing practical tasks and therefore, they get motivated in learning English, when they are closely introduced with the topic and its specific aspects as well as practice of subsequent grammar structures during the whole process of the teaching- learning cycle and producing the text after having performed the suggested stages.

Students however, need a lot of time for developing writing skills according to the genre-based approach.

A. Firkins (2007: 350) notes “the approach clearly assists students to organize their writing and understand the nature of a text within an activity based context”. Moreover, the teacher is able to choose or combine the necessary approach for teaching and learning writing from the variety of them. A. Raimes (1983: 11) suggests “there is no one way to teach writing, but many ways”.

The variety of different approaches, teaching techniques and methods, activities and instruments let the teacher to organise the writing process accordingly students’ level of knowledge, interests and possibilities.

3.3. PROBLEMS IN TEACHING WRITING

Writing is the most difficult productive skill, which needs to be developed through learning a foreign language at school. One of the biggest problems, connected with writing is shortage of time. It is a well known fact that teachers dedicate less time to practice writing skills than to reading, speaking, listening or teaching grammar. Therefore, students sometimes are not ready to produce writing, especially, if they are doing it independently at home.

D. Byrne (1988) describes the kinds of written work and suggests following types of them. Writing consists of various genres essentially different for definite knowledge levels, thus intermediate and upper-intermediate level students should write more essays than letters, postcards or messages. Evidently, essay writing diverse teaching techniques to develop students’ writing skills.

Teaching and learning writing is a complex process supported by many activities which should be done during this process. Generating ideas, brainstormings, organisation of ideas in a written form require time and appropriate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. If students have any difficulties with mentioned patterns, writing would not be a successful and interesting as activity for students. J. Harmer (1998: 79) states “the visual demonstration of language construction is invaluable for both our understanding of how it all fits together and as an aid to committing the new language to memory”.

Therefore, writing seems to be a priceless way of practising language. Students can be motivated in writing by teacher’s explanation of writing purpose and language practise as

well. D. Byrne (1988: 3) notes “although writing is clearly much more dependent on how effectively we use the linguistic resources of the language [...]”.

D. Byrne (1983) suggests that writing should be trained a lot and with doing writing many times, the level of language knowledge will improve.

Writing often seems a difficult activity for students as they work individually, therefore teachers have to prepare students for writing at the lessons. Students can work at the lessons in groups: find important vocabulary, do brainstorming, mind-mapping, generating ideas and information useful for a specific topic. The teacher’s task is to provide students for appropriate language devices for doing and presenting parts of writing. When students have support in producing a piece of writing they write with pleasure and without panic.

Moreover, for writing skills’ practice and popularisation teachers should give a lot of various short writing tasks and exercises to be done as much as possible at every lesson to develop writing skills through these activities. Writing cannot be unconnected with other skills, therefore when students practise writing skills they as well practise reading, listening and speaking skills. They have to read the written work, listen to classmates who read for others and present their work in speaking.

The last problem in teaching and learning writing is connected with the final result of doing writing. Sometimes students are unable to finish their writing task or rewrite it, because they do not see the aim of the work or are not motivated in doing a piece of writing. Therefore, teachers should provide writing with careful support at each stage of writing process. Students’ writing should not be evaluated only by marks but also by students’ or the teacher’s comments as students have to see the importance of their individual work and progress in developing writing skills.

3.4. PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING WRITING

For developing writing skills and choosing the most suitable and relevant activities as for teaching as for learning which can make writing a meaningful and productive skill principles of teaching and evaluating writing have been defined. I. Nation (2009) mentions the following principles of teaching writing: Meaning- focused Input, Meaning-focused Output, Language-focused Learning and Fluency Development.

Meaning-focused Input is based on the choice of relevant topics which should be connected with the students' level of knowledge and preparation for writing.

Students should bring into play their experience in writing that makes their writing exclusive. Furthermore, finding information about the topic to write about is a significant stage in writing process. This step helps students to draw attention to gathering information which will be appropriate for a specific topic. Motivation and engagement in a particular topic plays an important role in teaching and learning writing skills.

Meaning-focused Output apprehends the variety and types of writing tasks. Students practice writing skills doing different writing tasks. This kind of work should be a way of communication between students and the teacher or writers and readers. Students should see the importance of their writing and it will enhance the validity of their writing. The knowledge of language must be developed throughout practice writing.

Language-focused Learning is focused on the students' knowledge of the stages in writing process, their link and significance of each stage in writing process. Moreover, students should be provided with teacher's comments about their writing and later should make editions or corrections on their own or by the teacher or their classmates. This principle of teaching English is formulated as real help and support for students who start writing in a foreign language and have difficulties with organisation of writing, spelling and evaluation of the work.

Fluency Development is the principle which follows after the long period of learning and teaching writing when a student has strong and clear knowledge of the language, knowledge about writing organisation and planning, vocabulary and is introduced with different types of writing activities. There exists a range of repeated and drilled written tasks to be accomplished by students to enlarge their speed of writing.

Fluency development principle is basically important for students at intermediate or upper-intermediate level when they are ready to write freely without any difficulties or problems.

Teaching and developing writing skills is a complex process which is based on the knowledge of differences in L1 and L2, principles in teaching writing, possible problems in writing and the right use of approaches and the organisation of the writing process. The knowledge of differences in native and foreign languages helps the teacher to predict possible errors in learning and teaching writing skills, find more suitable and effective techniques for language

acquisition. The principles of teaching writing skills help the teacher organise the process of language learning accordingly several criteria. The effectiveness of written work depends on the choice of approaches, their suitability for individual student and the whole class. Avoiding problems in teaching writing skills make the learning process successful and valuable.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Teaching writing at secondary school is mostly grounded on developing writing, especially writing essays, because this genre is tested during the examination. Scientists: D. Byrne (1988), A. Rames (1983), J. Harmer (1998) admit that a wide number of students have difficulties with this kind of writing; therefore this theme has to be studied deeply. Previously mentioned authors note that finding the ways of developing writing skills at secondary school let teachers to improve teaching writing and investigate new techniques, which may be useful at secondary school.

4.1. DESCRIPTION OF WRITING PURPOSE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Sometimes, teachers at secondary school find that after teaching writing skills at basic school, students have to be taught writing through writing compositions or essays without any preparations or help in the process of writing. However writing essays or compositions should be practised and controlled, because students need support and further development of writing skills at intermediate and upper-intermediate levels.

Moreover, developing writing skills can be presented by doing different writing tasks, like writing letters, newspaper articles or reports. However, J. Harmer (1988: 80) notes “[...], the type of writing we get students to do will depend on their age, interests and level”. These written works help students to get knowledge of organisation ideas in writing, development the vocabulary and grammar structures. Furthermore, essays and compositions are genres, which are rarely used in a real life and although they are important at the ending of secondary school they are less used afterwards.

For the duration of describing writing tasks D. Byrne (1988 :112) states “composition and essay writing also provide opportunities for what is often called ‘free expression’: the learners are allowed to say what they like on a given topic or theme”. Nevertheless, this kind of writing tasks will be thriving, when teachers will prepare students for them, not always control their writing, but help with its production and improvement.

Teaching and learning writing essays is a long and difficult process, in which there are involved many different phases of producing a piece of writing. J. Scrivener (2005: 192) implies “there is more time to think, to reflect, to prepare, to rehearse, to make mistakes and to find alternative and better solutions”. Therefore students have to know the process of essays writing and practise it during studying at school. C. Bereiter and M. Scardamalia (1983: 20) in a book “Learning to write: First language/Second language editors: A. Freedman, I. Pringle and J. Yalden assert: “Writing a long essay is probably the most complex constructive act that most human beings are ever expected to perform”.

The writing process of producing essays needs knowledge of grouping ideas, organisation patterns, useful range of vocabulary, a variety of grammar structures and therefore, it should be taught at secondary school more profoundly.

4.2. WRITING ESSAYS

Language scientists have defined a huge amount of essays types: “five-paragraph, admission, argumentative, cause and effect, classification, comparison, critical, deductive, definition, exploratory, expository, informal, literature, narrative, personal, persuasive, research, response and scholarship essay” (Online 2). Nevertheless, not all kinds of essays are taught to write at secondary school, as they have importance for students’ further studies. D. Pauna (2001) states that all kinds of essays have similarities in the process of their producing.

According to D. Byrne (1988) essays processing composed of three stages, which are known as pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing. Activities on each stage of process writing help students to produce a piece of writing and develop writing skills.

Firstly, writing essays starts with the choice of the topic, which will be the first step of essay writing process. The topic is followed by the theme, which is taught at the lessons of English, but it should be narrowed to a smaller topic, which could be described on essay. M. McClain and J. D.Roth (1999: 3) suggest students:” if you take the trouble to find a topic which you care deeply, you are likely to write a very good essay”. Students’ interest in a topic is closely connected with reader’s interest. Readers should be interested in the written work; otherwise they would not understand and discuss it with the author of the written work.

Secondly, according to I. Nation (2009), D.Byrne (1988), J. Harmer (1998) after finding the topic for an essay, there follows next step-researching the questions about the topic. There students collect useful information, which helps them to develop the topic and answer the

questions. The pre-writing stage may have the following activities: listening tasks about topic, reading newspaper articles, journals or books, gathering and organizing ideas. The range of vocabulary and linking words, which will be used in writing essays, can be prepared during this stage. One of the described activities: gathering ideas and organising them can be done during the lesson with the whole group of students. According to D. Pauna (2001) mind-mapping is one of the effective tools, which may involve students in discussions about the topic; it helps students not only with finding ideas, but with collecting an appropriate sort of vocabulary, which later may be used in writing essays. The role of the teacher is to be a guide and helper in preparing reading and listening activities, producing mind-maps and discussing with students organisation of an essay. Therefore, a lot of time is spent for finding the relevant and important material for writing essay. V. Urguhart and M. McIver (2005: 12) declares “current research in writing suggest that students are devoting more attention and time to prewriting activities”.

Thirdly, students start to produce writing an essay and summarizing collected information, ideas and vocabulary. This stage of writing process is more individual, than collective, because the aim of developing writing skills is to prepare students for individual writing. However, there are collaborative activities, which are based on group work in writing. D. Byrne (1988: 46) suggests:

“However, the important thing is that activities of this kind change students’ attitudes towards writing: they come to see how they can communicate through writing; how they can use writing purposefully and how it forms a natural part of certain activities”.

In group activities students can discuss the possible plan of essays, the organisation and interesting facts, which may be used in writing, write questionnaires and diaries.

Fourthly, draft making is an essential activity which can be done at home or in the classroom and the place here is important. When students make a draft at school, teacher can see what students know or do not know and what important instructions should be given students for further writing. Preparing a draft may be given as homework, too. V. Urguhart and M. McIver (2005: 17) indicate “because drafting is by nature imperfect, students can complete it outside of class time”. Drafts can be written and rewritten many times; therefore, the time for producing a draft should be short. D. Byrne (1988: 119) notes “generally, drafts should be written quite quickly- because they will be reworked and corrected afterwards”.

Therefore, writing drafts is a base for producing and developing further writing. During the stage of drafting students put their ideas on the paper, make sentences from single words and

generalize received information in the written form. Furthermore, D. Pauna (2001: 65) gives students suggestions: “Do not be concerned with grammar, punctuation or spelling; simply be concerned with getting your ideas down in a tentative shape that you can polish later”. Correction of mistakes, modification of grammar structures will follow in next stages. At the stage of drafting students freely record their ideas and thoughts in writing.

Fifthly, next stage of producing essays is connected with revising or modifying the piece of writing. At this stage students can rework their piece of writing, change words or sentence structures, correct their writing and make relevant changes in organisation of writing. Students at this time have possibilities to correct, to analyse and improve their writing. Students will be successful in producing a piece of writing, later they will have no difficulties at these stages and will need less time for drafting and revising stages.

The last stage of writing essays is focused on editing; correcting the written work by other students or teachers can help students with the work at the last stage: correct mistakes and write necessary comments, which would improve students’ essays. Students make final conclusions and editions in writing. V.Urguhart and M. McIver (2005: 11) characterize editing as “the process of checking written work for the conventions of writing and any lingering concerns with voice, tone, and style”. D.Byrne (1988) explains stages in writing essays:

- List possible ideas
- Select and expand one idea
- Make an outline
- Write a draft
- Correct and improve draft
- Write final version

The last stage in writing essays is important for students, because they evaluate the piece of writing and analyse how inspiring is the introduction, well-structured body and perceptive conclusion. The introduction involves and motivates readers in further essay reading, the body presents all details about the given topic and conclusion generalizes the main ideas of writing.

To summarize the main ideas, writing an essay should be a clearly organised process, where the importance of pre-writing, while writing and post- writing activities play a great role in

the writing process. The success in a piece in writing depends on students' preparation for writing and their guiding in writing essays. When students acquire the knowledge of producing essays, they later will write freely and writing become an independent act of the writing process.

4.3. CORRECTION OF WRITTEN TEXTS

When students have finished their writing, the teachers' role is to correct mistakes in essays; this can be done during writing process and improving drafts. J.Edge (1989: 50) states "correction should mean helping people to become more accurate, not insisting on completely standard English". Students can learn to write correctly with the teacher's help during studying at school and acquire some vital knowledge of grammar style, linguistic style and orthographical styles of writing. It will help them to understand and discover L2 better, especially if students are at the post intermediate level and are getting ready for their examinations.

J. Edge (1989), D. Byrne (1988) and J. Scrivener (2005) have investigated the symbols of correction of written texts; although, they offer different systems of correcting mistakes, the main points which they have stressed are: word order in a sentence, spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes, the meaning of sentence-if it is not understandable and missing word or words. J. Edge (1989: 53) notes "the important thing is that your students understand what you mean by them, and that signals help the students concentrate on mistakes in their writing that they can correct themselves". They have prepared symbols or signals to designate mistakes but for the post intermediate level students it is not necessary to pay attention to each mistake, only the main mistakes, which disturb readers to understand the sense of written texts.

Moreover, there are some correction procedures, which can be used at work with mistakes. D. Byrne (1988) has singled out and described some of them, which may interest teachers, who improve their knowledge in methodology. Firstly, mistakes can be corrected by teacher with the mentioned symbols of mistakes. There are some advantages and disadvantages in correction all mistakes of students' writing. It will be more effective to check students' work and correct their mistakes during the lesson, when students are interested in the writing process and the correction of mistakes. When the correction by the teacher is done later, students might not be engaged in the work with mistakes. Moreover, this correction will be

successful only for some students, because others will not learn anything from the teacher's correction. Therefore, the teacher should practise different procedures of correcting mistakes.

Furthermore, correction by teacher may be done variously and it depends on the students' level of knowledge and the time of doing the written work. The teachers can simply underline mistakes and put the symbols of these mistakes on margins or not use symbols and the students have to correct the mistakes by themselves. The second way of correction is writing a symbol on the margin, but not show where exactly the mistake is. The third way is based on cross in margins. Thus we can help the students in the correction of mistakes and the variety of correction procedures will engage students in learning to write correctly, when they see different approaches of correction mistakes. The correction of mistakes in different ways gives students possibility to avoid of common mistakes, develop attention and writing skills.

Secondly, the teacher can select some mistakes and decide which of them are more important for students to develop in writing at this period. Students will not be bored with correction of the whole written text and will work on the particular aspect of writing: grammar, spelling, vocabulary or organisation of writing.

Thirdly, at the post-intermediate level, the teacher can only underline the mistakes; students will correct them by themselves and learn a lot by this procedure. Fourthly, not only self-correction can be used as an approach of correction, students may also do correction in groups or pairs and develop their language by doing it. D. Byrne (1988: 126) notes "this approach certainly makes them more aware of the kind of mistakes they are making and is therefore likely to result in something being learned".

Finally, according to Byrne D. (1988) there are some stages on the work with mistakes that can be done during the lesson. The teacher may explain the mistakes in an oral or written way, or explain mistakes in the margins or at the end of written work. "This procedure is especially useful for drawing attention to recurrent mistakes in a particular area and when you are able to look at students' work in class" (*ibid.*). The next stage is connected with the teacher's consultation about the mistakes, when students can ask the teacher for help. The last stage is useful for the students that have problems with similar mistakes and the teacher helps students to correct them.

The correction of mistakes is the last stage in writing essays or other written work, which come together with evaluation of them. Assessment in writing is as important for teachers, to

see the students' progress and difficulties in writing, as for students, to get valuable evaluation of their written works.

4.4. EVALUATION OF WRITING

According to D. Byrne (1988), A. Rames (1983), J. Harmer (1998) and Spangler M. and Werner R. (1989) evaluation of students' written works has got many positive factors. First, evaluation of the piece of writing motivates students in their writing process. Second, assessment of written works can be done for diverse purposes, which have importance in developing writing skills at secondary school, especially for students, who are finishing it. The purpose of evaluation and the time, when it was done, is important for some cases.

For example, J. Lipmann (2003) in "Concepts in Composition" with editor I. Clark describe several characteristics of assessment, which can be used by teachers at particular stage of writing process. There are "formative" and "summative" kinds of assessment, whose purposes are dissimilar.

According to J. Lipmann (2003) "formative" evaluation is mostly used during the writing process, when the students are developing, editing and correcting their written works. Firstly, self-evaluation is the main step in the process of writing essays, students should be able to evaluate and improve their writing, which would make them as self-sufficient authors. Students can evaluate their writing with comment at the lessons or they can fill in self-evaluation checklists.

For example, Spangler M. and Werner R. (1989) suggest to load in "the paragraph Evaluation Sheet", where students or a teacher analyse a particular paragraph of essay: the main ideas, supportive sentences, grammar and spelling. As a result, during the writing process students are informed about their mistakes or weak sides of their written work and have a possibility to correct, improve and develop their essays immediately, at the beginning of the writing process.

This kind of evaluation helps them better learn and understand the organisation of written works in practical way. Later, after writing and presenting all the paragraphs, the students and the teacher are able to fill in the checklist about the whole written work, where they evaluate: parts of an essay, organisation of paragraphs in introduction, the main body and conclusion,

coherence of the written work and usage of the linking words, the pronouns, synonyms, the adjectives, the adverbs and the most common grammar mistakes. At the end of the checklist the teacher or the students can write the final comments about the whole work and point out the strong and the weak sides of the essays and what should be improved by the author later.

Moreover, M. McClain and J. D. Roth (1999) offer students to analyse and evaluate their written work by answering questions themselves at the end of the writing process. A. Raimes (1983) also describes the structures of the checklists for the evaluation of students' writing and improving, which will be filled in by the teacher or students. Therefore, the role of "formative" assessment is popular among many scientists, who research "formative" evaluation and give suggestions of its use at school.

Furthermore, students and teachers assess written works, which will be finished later, after making some editing and correcting. Students in groups can read their classmates written papers and comment on them. Also, the evaluation of the peers' writing is significant and gives students experience in organising of writing, analysing grammar structures and correcting mistakes in their peers' writing. This type of evaluation writing helps students to develop their critical thinking and evaluate their own writing objectively and realistically.

When teachers use "formative" assessment, apart from filling checklists or oral comments, teachers can evaluate students' writing with written comments at the end of the work. The aim of the comments is to help students improve their written work, to show them the possible ways of correcting and developing their essays for the final version. However, the teacher's written comments may be used not only during writing, but the teachers can evaluate the students' written work at the end of writing process and explain their personal attitude to the written paper, which will show students the teacher's as a reader's interest in the piece of writing. I. Nation (2009: 137) states "positive feedback on the content of learners' writing can do a lot to increase the amount of writing that learners do and to improve their attitude to writing". The role of "formative" assessment is great for students' motivation in developing writing skills and allows them to produce a piece of writing with teacher's help and support in writing process.

Although, the "summative" kind of evaluation of students written work takes consequential place in the teaching and learning of a foreign language, because teachers have to evaluate students' knowledge and abilities with marks or grades during the learning process at school

and the “summative” assessment is important at examinations, where written work is assessed by grades. J. Neff Lipmann (2003: 203) notes: “In assessing writing, the goal of summative assessment is not to shape students’ thinking or learning, but rather to judge how well students have accomplished the writing task”.

Therefore, there is a system of points, for making assessment more objective and teachers have possibilities to evaluate the students’ written work by using the same table of criteria and making evaluation productive, honest and realistic.

Moreover, I. Nation (2009: 137) focuses on “summative” evaluation: “It can aim at making summative judgement on the learner’s writing for the purpose of awarding a grade, or passing or failing”.

To sum up, the purposes of use diverse kinds of evaluation are various and might be used depending on students’ language level, knowledge, the kind of tasks and their aims. The choice of ways, how to evaluate students’ writing should be tuned to teachers’ and students’ experience and have clear criteria for assessment. Development of language proficiency depends not on marks, but clear organisation of assessment, which should be done during the whole period of studying a foreign language, or other subjects at school. Marks or grades are not important as for students and teachers as the real value of the English language and more than ever, teaching and developing writing skills at secondary school.

CHAPTER V

THE EMPIRICAL PART

The author of the diploma paper has selected the theme of the diploma paper based on her personal experience at school as an English teacher. During the teaching, the author has been finding the most common and actual difficulties in teaching writing skills. Many students have difficulties in learning writing skills and producing a piece of writing. Students cannot write successfully, they found difficulties in a choice of the right vocabulary; they lack of linking words and problems with the task organisation. The author of the present paper decided to research this problem and help students to improve their writing skills. Writing essays by use different approaches is the main aspect of the research.

5.1. THE PURPOSE OF THE EMPIRICAL PART

The purpose of the diploma paper is the analysis of the course book for 11th form students M. Harris (2002), investigation of written works: organisation, use of vocabulary and linking words, approbation Free Writing Approach, Controlled-to-Free Approach and Genre Based Approach in developing writing skills.

The three main directions will be used during the research:

- a) analysing the course book;
- b) approbation research methods and techniques: design of questionnaires, the ways of evaluation of written work in developing writing skills at secondary school;
- c) piloting the activities and exercises for improving students' writing skills.

The author of the present paper tries to practice divergent methods and techniques for progress students' writing skills during studies at secondary school.

5.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

The respondents are the 11th grade students form Ezernieki Secondary School. There are 13 students: six girls and seven boys, who were involved in the research and process of developing writing skills at secondary school. In general, there are only eight students, who are creative and motivated in learning the English language, because they always do

homework, work actively during the lessons and try to make writing process more complex, what was seen in their written work during studying English language for nine years, because they would like to pass examination of English at the end of studies. The author of the present paper states that the level of knowledge is low upper- intermediate and for the other part of students low-intermediate. The author of the diploma work has been teaching students for nine years and has been working with them as a form mistress.

5.3. THE PROCEDURE OF THE EMPIRICAL PART

To complete the research the author of the present paper has planned the following stages of teaching and developing writing skills at secondary school, mainly writing essays in form 11.

Firstly, the author decided to study the problems in teaching and learning writing skills, difficulties in writing essays. Later, were formulated the hypothesis, objectives and questions of the research. Study of theoretical and methodological literature, which was focused on teaching and developing writing skills, was the first act of the work.

Secondly, the preferred methods of gathering and obtaining data, analysing course book and the activities of the empirical part were selected, furthermore, were established useful tools: questionnaires and practised different techniques of evaluation for defining the problems in writing and achieving the aims of the research.

Lastly, the author selected and approbated activities, which were based on developing writing skills: to expand the knowledge of linking words and their correct use in written works, improving writing skills during the use of Free-Writing Approach, teaching writing essays focused on different approaches: Controlled-to-Free and Genre Based approaches. Use of questionnaires about writing skills, gave the author possibilities to determine main problems in learning and teaching writing.

5.3.1. LINKING WORDS IN WRITTEN WORK

During the research the author has done the analysis of the course book: “Opportunities” Upper-Intermediate Level written by Michael Harris (2002) for gathering information about the tasks which are offered to students for developing their writing skills and the knowledge

of linking words. In the period of this work, the author has defined the following tasks with linking words:

- completing the story with linking words; (Appendix 1)
- completing the gaps in the text with these words (linking words);
- classifying the linking words underlined in the text: reason (explain the cause of an action), purpose (shows the aim of an action);
- rewriting the information by using linking words;

Furthermore, the writing section of this book is provided with linking words, which might be used in a particular written work (Appendix 2). However, the author of the paper decided to study the linking words besides the given tasks because a wide number of students do not understand the purpose of the linking words and mix them with adverbs or adjectives, when they write essays or other genres of writing. Therefore, the author of the present paper finds out some activities to improve the knowledge and right use of linking words. Teaching and learning writing skills was focused on following activities which should help students to use linking words in their writing and develop the quality of essays.

Activity 1.

Firstly, the teacher distributed the sample copies of lists of linking words, which were divided in categories and explained the purpose of each category and possible place of linking words in a sentence. The list of linking words was taken from the Internet source (online 3).

The aims of this step were:

- to give students examples of linking words, which will be used by students in writing tasks;
- to define linking words from other parts of speech;
- to combine useful linking words in one paper and make easy the process of the choice and use them at practice.

The results: Students were interested in the list of linking words (Appendix 3), because they found important to have a separate copy of linking words and easy to use in written work. Later, they started to use more linking words in written work and the knowledge of linking words was improved as well.

Activity 2

The teacher selected and prepared some tasks with linking words which would help students to perfect their knowledge of linking words and practise them at the lessons which were connected with teaching writing skills.

Linking words prevalently from one of the categories were written on the blackboard and students made sentences with them, underline linking words and wrote sentences in notebooks.

Aims of the task:

- Students practise to use the appropriate linking words;
- This task makes easier the process of recognition the linking words;
- Students practise in producing long sentences with the linking words;

The results:

Students learn to use linking words and make sentences longer; therefore, the quality of written work was increased. The examples of the use of the linking words were copied in notebooks and later students had possibility to use their notes in written work.

Activity 3.

Preparation for the task: the teacher arranged sample copies with activities (online 5, 6), connected with linking words (Appendix 4)

Students did the task at the beginning of lesson, basically connected with presentation of written work.

Time: 5-7 min.

After the task was done, students and the teacher checked the received answers and made corrections.

Aims of the task:

Students could fix the knowledge of the linking words, moreover, they produce and develop sentences with linking words help.

The results:

Frequent practise of different tasks let students to supplement their essays with the linking words, which were taught during the lessons in developing writing skills.

The importance of the knowledge of linking words was proved by students' essays (included in Appendix 7) which means that mentioned activities with linking words and their frequent practise helped students to learn linking words, their meaning and place in sentences. Before doing these activities students basically used the following linking words: but, and, however, too, so in the written work and after doing these tasks, they started to use more linking words: firstly, secondly, because of, because of it, whereas, therefore, moreover, due to, as the result and others.

5.3.2. DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS THROUGH VARIOUS WRITING APPROACHES

Free-Writing Approach

Students often do not like writing skills and are not motivated in writing; therefore, the author started to use Free-Writing Approach at the beginning of every lesson.

Preparation: Students had a special notebook for producing their piece of writing. The date of the work is written before each piece of writing.

Procedure: Students wrote freely five-seven minutes, the theme of the topic is free and their piece of writing was not checked. Sometimes students read their work, if they wanted to share their writing with classmates. When students started to do this task, they were nervous and found difficult to write about everything they want, but later some of them wrote without any difficulties however, when their piece of writing was checked, there were mistakes: use of tenses, word order in sentences and problems with spelling.

The aims of the work:

- to develop students' writing skills without stressing the mistakes.
- motivate students in writing with Free-Writing Approach help and involve them in writing process without panic and stress.
- practise writing skills and knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and linking words every day what can be important for development students' fluency in writing.

The results of the work

The quality of writing was improved and the validity of written work became higher.

Students found that writing is easier when it is practised every lesson and when friends or the teacher can help with vocabulary or advice.

However, some students were passive at doing this work, because they were not interested in studying foreign languages or had difficulties in language acquisition.

Moreover, it is difficult to limit the time for writing because students were not always ready to finish their work on time.

WRITING ESSAY BASED ON CONTROLLED-TO-FREE APPROACH

Essay writing is the most difficult writing task for students in many following cases:

1. organising of the essay;
2. planning of the writing;
3. gathering ideas;
4. choosing appropriate use and place of linking words;

Therefore, the author of the diploma paper tried to use different approaches in teaching writing essays.

This year students in 11th form work with the course book: "Opportunities" Upper Intermediate written by M. Harris (2002). The module of the book: "Soft machine" is connected with describing the topic about the health and students have to write at the end of this theme an essay: "Should smoking be banned?"

Preparation for writing an essay in the course book was explained in description of stages in writing an essay, but the author of the present paper organized the work of an essay in a different way.

Before topic presentation students and the author of paper discussed in native language (Latvian) bad habits and their influence on human's body: students collected and study the materials about habits, the results of surveys about smoking at the lesson of upbringing. This discussion, reading articles from magazines, gathering information about smoking and making decisions about healthy lifestyle supplied students with the facts about smokers and non-smokers, helped students in writing process and gave them obvious ideas about the content of an essay.

Furthermore, the students during the several lessons were introduced with the health problems, illnesses, causes and effects of lifestyle and necessary vocabulary. They did reading, listening and speaking activities focused on health and health problems.

At the end of module students were asked to write a discursive essay.

Lesson N1

Preparation for writing an essay could be seen in diagram (Appendix 5) and described in stages:

1. Revision of linking words which may be used in an essay: although, despite, even though, however, in spite of, on the other hand, whereas. Students made own sentences with presented linking words, teachers made corrections in sentences.

(5 min.)

2. Students read a text “Does Mother Nature Know best?” written by M. Harris (2002 :70) in the course book about cloning and put linking words in the text. (10 min)

3. Students in groups of 3- 4 were discussing, brainstorming and gathering the main ideas connected with the title of an essay: “Should Smoking Be Banned?” All their ideas were written down on the paper. After this activity, each group presented their work and the poster was stuck on the blackboard. Finally, students chose the better ideas for using them in an essay and made a list of possible ideas and words in their notebooks. (Appendix 6).The teacher helped students to correct mistakes, to select useful ideas for particular topic. (12 min)

4. Next stage of work was focused on making a plan of an essay: introduction, the main part and conclusion. During this stage the teacher offered the students the possible phrases for the beginning of each essay part. The advantages and disadvantages of smoking were stressed in the discussion. Also was stressed the importance of their order in written work which depended on personal attitude about smoking. (7 min)

5. Lastly, it is discussed the organisation of an essay and students asked questions about the mentioned aspects. (6 min)

Writing an essay was done at home and the teacher corrected a draft: were used symbols on margins and written comments about useful correction. After editing, rewriting and improving the first draft, the final work (Appendix 7) was checked again and evaluated according the chart (Appendix 8)from “Opportunities” Test book (2002 :7).

The results of this written work show that students' essays have clear organisation, as the result of work in organisation writing during the lesson. Essays are provided with wide range of vocabulary and linking words which were taught at the lesson. The paragraphs in an essay are connected and focused on logical description of advantages and disadvantages, personal attitude to smokers and advice for government and people who smoke. The teacher explained the differences in description advantages and disadvantages which depend on the student's personal opinions about smoking. Some students used real facts from survey about the number of smokers and their age.

Moreover, he received results of written work shown that Controlled-to-Free approach help students in many aspects: they learnt how to choose important ideas, organise their work and produce drafts and plans of an essay.

WRITING ESSAY BASED ON GENRE-BASED APPROACH

The work in writing an essay focused on statement: "The only way to crime in our country is to make punishment more severe." This essay was offered after studying the module: "Society" from the course book "Opportunities. Upper-Intermediate." written by M. Harris (2002). The author of paper teaching this module came to conclusion that there is not enough information for preparation students to writing an essay about crime and punishment therefore was planned additional lesson for improving students' knowledge of particular topic.

The aims of the work

The author of the diploma paper has chosen elements of Genre- Based approach with aims to develop writing skills through reading articles and search of materials about crime and punishment, develop students' vocabulary of theme: "Crime. Punishment." and engage students in writing through speaking activity.

Preparation

Preparation for writing an essay was done through different activities which should help students to understand the purpose of writing an essay about the particular statement.

1. One group of students found information about this theme in the Internet, school library and presented chosen information to their classmates.

2. The second group of students found and collected words, phrases which should be important and used in written work, later students presented their list of vocabulary to their classmates.
3. The teacher prepared the list of the possible situations for each student about the theme: “Punishment”, students discussed in pairs and later gave their opinion about sentences which might be used in punishing crimes. (Appendix 9).

Variations

The previously mentioned activities can be done during the project work and summarized in one brochure which can be distributed to all participants of the project. For example, all reading texts and activities for them can be collected in one chapter of the brochure; the second chapter can contain useful words with explanations and phrases which can be used in writing an essay. The last chapter may collect opinions of the participants in this project, interviews with police officers or students from the Police Academy. The last can express their thoughts and ideas about studying there and present to the students important information for future career. The length of the time for doing the project work should be chosen by the teacher and the project participants.

Procedure

Before the lesson, students were divided in two groups and had a homework for a week to find in the Internet, library or other places important material about crime and punishment.

Lesson N 2

The teacher introduced students with the topic, plan of the lesson and theme which will be discussed during the lesson. (2-3 min.)

Students discussed situations which were described by teacher and were used for speaking activity (10-15 min.). They gave possible solutions of problems, answered questions and shared with opinions and knowledge about theme: “Crime. Punishment.”

The second stage of the lesson was connected with presentations of groups and started with presentation of reading texts which had importance in this theme and helped students to get useful facts, information and ideas for writing an essay.

Students have chosen for further reading the text (Appendix 10): “Missing people” from the book: “Test your reading” written by M. Dean (2003 :32). Students read the text (3 min). The text was provided with the following tasks: the main understanding of the text and finding the person’s description in the text (7min.).

The second group of class made a mind-map and presented it to others after reading the text and doing the tasks. Students during presentation did not translate words but explained the meaning of unknown words. (5 min.) Each student got a copy of presented vocabulary in mind- map at the end of “vocabulary” presentation. (Appendix 11)

The last stage of the lesson was organised by the teacher where students and the teacher collaboratively made a plan of an essay, revised organisation of an essay and a range of vocabulary what will be used in written work. Students made necessary notes in notebooks. (7 min)

Students wrote essays (Appendix 12) on the second lesson at the same day; later essays were checked by the teacher. Mistakes were margined by symbols and the written work was not evaluated but it was supported with comments at the end of work.

Advantages: Students were interested in work in the Internet, library and in other places to find information about chosen theme and make presentation at the class. Each of students was engaged at work by doing different tasks and got knowledge about the theme what was one step in preparation for writing process.

Disadvantages: Mentioned work needs clear organisation of work in groups and long period of time for preparing materials for presentations. Students have found a lot of material about the topic, however only some texts were used at the lesson because of lack of time.

Lesson had all the mentioned activities which belong to Genre-Based approach because students got the background knowledge during the introduction with the theme through reading, speaking and discussion activities, got the range of necessary vocabulary and tried to use it during the lesson.

5.4. THE QUESTIONNAIRES OF THE EMPIRICAL PART

There were two questionnaires that were filled in by 13 respondents. The first questionnaire was done at the beginning of the research. It was connected with the questions about writing as skill and writing an essay. The empirical part and the offered activities were formulated and based on the results of the first questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was completed after doing the writing activities and writing of the two essays. The questions were linked to the students' evaluation of the written activities: improving the knowledge of linking words, organisation writing essays with different approaches and the use of Free Writing Approach at the lessons during the school year.

5.5. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The author of the diploma paper during the time of research decided to design two questionnaires to define the problems in students' written work and possible improvement of their writing after piloting activities and use of a few approaches in writing process.

5.5.1. THE FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

The first questionnaire was designed to find out the students' knowledge about writing skills organisation, the use of linking words, attitude to writing skills, writing essays and possible problems in it (Appendix 13).

The first questionnaire consisted on ten questions and was filled on by 13 respondents: 7 boys and 6 girls in form 11th. The level of the knowledge low-intermediate to upper intermediate.

There were 10 questions in the questionnaire and the author of present paper obtained the data.

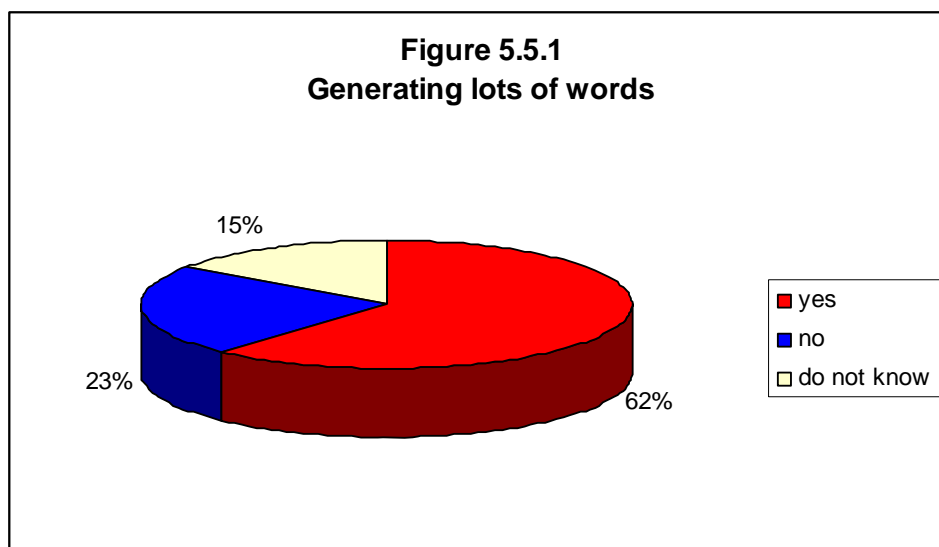
Question number one: **“What do you like the most in learning English?”** Possible answers were offered by the author of the diploma paper:

1. Reading
2. Speaking
3. Grammar
4. Writing

Many of respondents (9 students) have chosen reading, one student- speaking and three respondents-writing, because of their interests in different language skills.

Question number two: **“Do you think of yourself as a writer?”** 11 students answered that they do not feel themselves as a writer, one student did not know and one noted that think of herself as a writer.

Answers for the third question: **Can you generate lots of words?”**(Immediately, in the process of writing) divided in this way: 62% of students answered positively, 15% could not answer for this question and 23% could not generate lots of words. Therefore, the part of respondents when answered-could not generate lots of words.



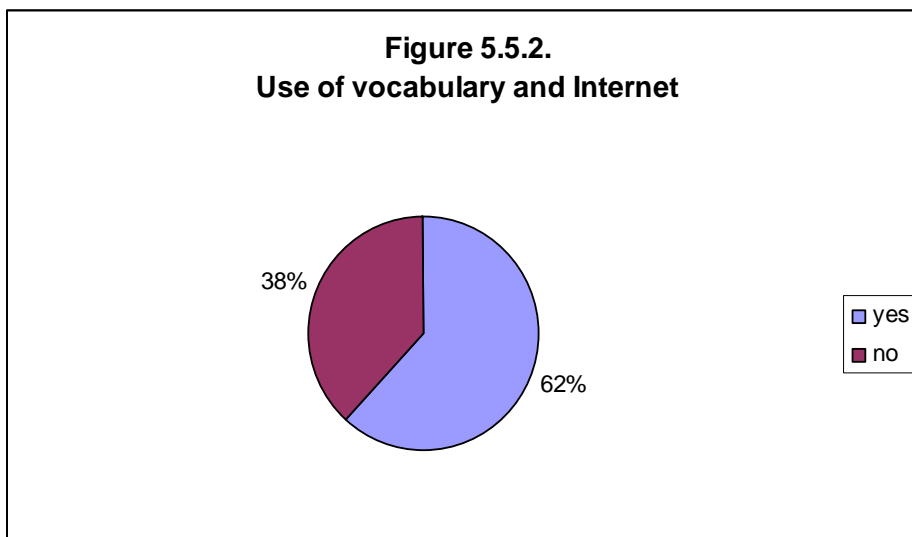
Question number four: **“What linking words do you use?”** was inducted to check students’ knowledge of the use of linking words in their written work. Two students did not use linking words at all; three students used linking words and recognized them among the other parts of speech. The majority of respondents (8 students) mixed the linking words with adverbs and could not name them.

Respondents were asked to name the most difficult genres of writing, were given possible answers: a letter, a report and an essay. Ten students chose an essay and three students a report as the most difficult genres. Surprisingly, writing a letter was not chosen by respondents, although it was very often practised at secondary school.

Question number six: **“How do you like working on a task?”** was provided with suggested answers, three students liked working in a small group and three students individually, last even students have chosen the work with a partner. These results are closely connected with the aspects of motivation and learning strategies where described the ways of organisation the work in the classroom and exactly work in pairs. Students feel more relaxed when they have support and help from their classmates therefore, they have chosen work in pairs and groups.

Students were asked to reflect on **do they write a draft first?** Five students answered that they made a draft first and eight respondents answered that they did not make a draft.

The answers to the question number eight: **“Do you use a vocabulary or Internet help during writing?”** are seen in the diagram. 38% of respondents mentioned in their answers that they did not use vocabularies or Internet in doing written work and 62% of respondents use vocabulary and Internet in writing.



The students were asked about: **“Do you make any changes after the teacher’s correction?”** and seven students answered that they made changes after teacher’s correction and six students did not make any changes.

The last question which was offered to students: **“Do you need the teacher’s help?”** collected following answers. 11 students admitted that they need the teacher’s help and two students gave negative answers that they did not need help in writing.

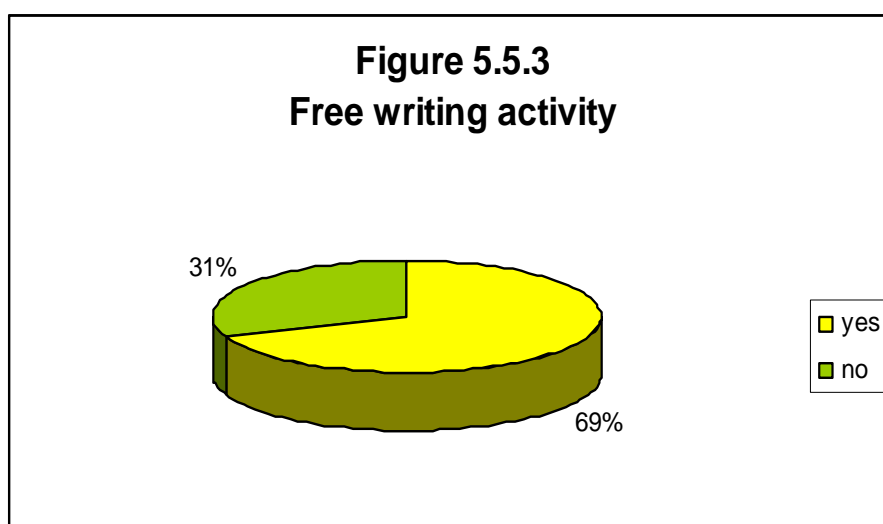
Received answers were used during the research and gave the teacher possible ideas of organising teaching writing skills at secondary school apparently focused on teaching writing essays.

5.5.2. THE SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

The second questionnaire was designed to check students' opinions about the effectiveness of the given tasks which were done during the time of research (Appendix 13). 13 Students were asked to give their answers for five questions provided with suggested answers.

Question number 1 was connected with the interest of activity which was done ever day at the beginning of the lesson. 31% of respondents answered negatively the question: **“Did you like everyday writing activity at the beginning of lesson?”**

69% of respondents answered that they liked to do this activity every day.

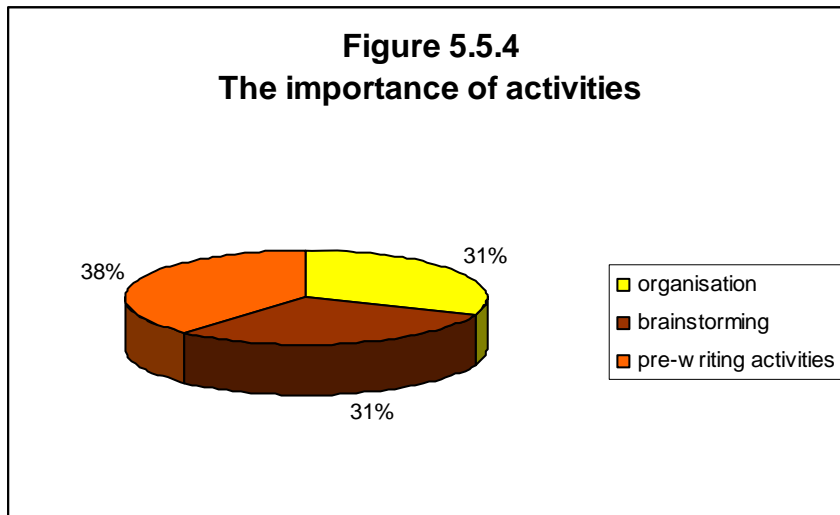


Answering for question number 2: **“What activities or tools helped you to improve the knowledge of linking words?”** two students chose the list of linking words, 5 students said that the activities from the course book helped them and 6 students mentioned the additional tasks designed by the teacher.

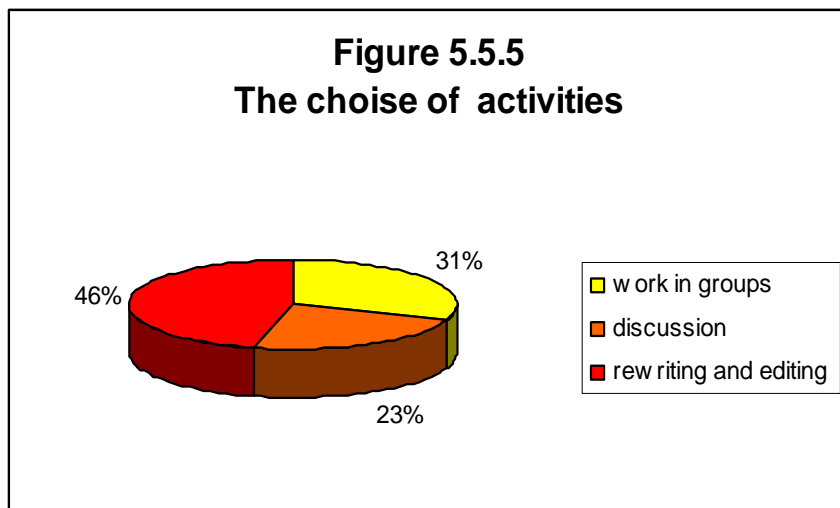
Question number 3 was connected with writing an essay and making additions: **“Did you write drafts of an essay?”** where 10 respondents answered positively and 3 respondents gave negative answer.

Question number 4 **“What was important for you?”** was intended to identify the importance of doing the activities in the students' preparation for writing essays. Were received subsequent answers. 31% of respondents said that learning how to organise an essay was important for them, the similar number of respondents admitted the importance of

brainstorming and gathering ideas and 38% of respondents stressed the importance of pre-writing activities: reading, speaking and listening for preparing students to write an essay. The mentioned activities provide the students with essential knowledge about the topic: facts, details, the results of surveys, useful vocabulary and phrases which can help the students to have success in a writing task.



The last question of the questionnaire was conducted with students' attitude to the previously described activities during teaching writing: **“What of the activities did you like the most?”** The results of the survey are shown in the diagram:



The majority of respondents (46%) said that they liked to work on editing and rewriting drafts, 23% claimed that they liked discussions about the topics which were offered for writing tasks and 31% of respondents admitted that liked work in groups in collection materials about the offered topics.

To sum up, rightly organised tasks help students to improve writing skills and develop other learning skills: reading, speaking and listening through doing pre-writing activities which prepare students for writing essays. Free-writing activity affords the students to produce a creative piece of writing without fear of mistakes and lack of vocabulary. Teaching to the students writing “subprocesses” facilitate writing process.

5.6. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EMPIRICAL PART

5.6.1. DEFINING THE PROBLEMS IN WRITING

The research of the diploma paper was focused on the problems in writing essays at secondary school. Therefore, there were designed questionnaires to find out the common problems in writing and the results of the empirical part.

The data showed that students do not like writing, because in their answers they pointed out that reading and speaking are more interesting for them. It means that a low interest in learning writing skills depends on students’ problems in it or problems in teaching writing skills. Many of the students do not like writing and said that they did not think of themselves as writers.

Great importance of use of linking words is one point of the success in writing; however, students’ answers showed that this pattern of vocabulary is not developed. Some students do not use linking words in their written work, some mix linking words and therefore, have no possibility to use them in their writing.

Writing an essay was called the most difficult genre in writing and therefore, the aims of teaching are to help students with developing writing essays: discover new ways of teaching writing an essay, show the right order of writing organisation, give students clear knowledge of linking words and their place in sentences, engage students in writing an essay and work with rewriting and making drafts. A part of students admitted that they do not make any changes after teacher’s correction what means that they do not learn from their mistakes, do not see and analyse their writing after teacher’s correction.

Students' answers about the organisation of the writing show that they feel unsafe in doing written work and need strong knowledge of planning and organising written work, vocabulary, linking words, grammar pattern which are used in writing.

5.6.2. THE FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL PART

To check students' knowledge of linking words, organisation of writing and the effectiveness of use some approaches was done the second questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire evidently show the advantages and disadvantages for taking an opportunity of use new, good-planned teaching methods and techniques.

Use of Free Writing approach helps students to be confident and creative in writing, moreover, many students find it interesting and exciting to write without fear of mistakes and possible errors, they are motivated in writing process and do not think at this stage about writing as product.

Additional work with linking words at the lessons is important for many students, because they understand the purpose and use of linking words and start to use them clearly and more in writing essays. Organisation of the work with linking words play great role in teaching and developing writing skills. Furthermore, students need a list of linking words as a visual tool in preparation for written work.

Students pointed out that the variety of different approaches is important for developing writing skills and improve students' weak sides of organisation writing process. Interesting activities like discussions, collecting and selecting useful material, presentation of the work let students improve many skills: reading, speaking, listening and finally, writing.

Motivation and engagement of students in writing enhance the writing process and the product of it, students indicate that all of the steps in writing process: brainstorming, gathering ideas, planning, editing and rewriting facilitate the writing process and make it creative and valuable.

The empirical part of the diploma paper exposed that teaching and developing writing skills depends on many factors: students' level of knowledge: vocabulary, grammar patterns and linking words; motivation and engagement in writing process, use of extensive approaches, clear organisation of writing and time for preparation in writing.

Different writing approaches make it feasible to develop and practise writing skills at the secondary school for preparing students for successful writing. Motivation in the written work depends on a choice of variable teaching methods and techniques which are significant for students and the teacher has to plan teaching accordingly to students' interests and the level of language knowledge.

The results of the questionnaires demonstrated the most common difficulties in students' writing and the possible ways of correcting and improving writing skills by the use of diverse approaches and activities. The achievement in writing is based on strict planning of the writing process, concentration, development and improvement of writing.

CONCLUSIONS

The aims of the diploma paper were to find out the ways of motivating learners to write and identifying the necessary linguistic tools and knowledge necessary for learners to improve their writing skills at secondary school.

The hypothesis of the research is verified: when students have necessary knowledge of writing process: planning, producing, editing and rewriting, their motivation in writing and the results of written work increases. The students' essays which were written during the time of research prove

Therefore, the designed writing activities for improvement the knowledge of linking words and elements of Free-Writing, Controlled-to-Free and Genre-Based approaches have an influence on development writing skills.

The goal of research is achieved. The problems in written work at secondary school were found and the author of the diploma paper tried to improve the necessary knowledge in writing essays by piloting different activities and tasks through use of different approaches, planning the lessons connected with development writing skills.

The students' response to the questionnaires shows that successful writing is focused on the writing process through following the stages whose importance is proved in written work. The quality of essays' depends not only on students' knowledge of the linguistic and organisational patterns but also on pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing activities.

Developing writing skills is a long and creative process where the teacher and students should work collaboratively to achieve the aims of written work and to improve the necessary knowledge and skills.

THESES

1. Nowadays the role of writing skills has changed significantly.
2. Writing is a well- structured process which needs to be developed and discussed at the beginning of teaching and learning writing.
3. The role of motivation is an essential part of teaching and learning process, moreover, the knowledge of motivational strategies gives teachers opportunities to improve teaching and learning process, to discover new ways and methods of developing foreign language.
4. Writing should be based on enjoyable and interesting tasks.
5. Students who are bad at writing in L1 may be not good at writing in L2.
6. The variety of different approaches, teaching techniques and methods, activities and instruments let the teacher to organise the writing process accordingly students' level of knowledge, interests and possibilities.
7. Writing an essay should be a clearly organised process, where the importance of pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing activities play a great role in the writing process.
8. Assessment in writing is important for teachers, to see the students' progress and difficulties in writing, as for students, to get valuable evaluation of their written work.
9. There is a system of points, for making assessment more objective and teachers have possibilities to evaluate the students' written work by using the same table of criteria and making evaluation productive.
10. Teaching and learning writing essays is a long and difficult process, in which there are involved many different phases of producing a piece of writing.

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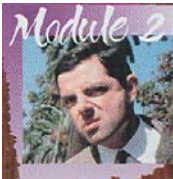
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3. <http://www.hawkerc.act.edu.au>
4. <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/mary.warner/Handouts/Writingskills.htm>
5. <http://school.obec.go.th/watkokhad/english>
6. http://www.languageproject.co.uk/free_exercises



Communication Workshop

Writing: A Personal Anecdote

Before you start

1 Read the story and match the headings (1-6) with the paragraphs (A-E). There is one extra heading.

- 1 Meeting Rusty Charley
- 2 The dice game
- 3 Some tough guys
- 4 High blood pressure
- 5 Back to normal
- 6 At Charley's place

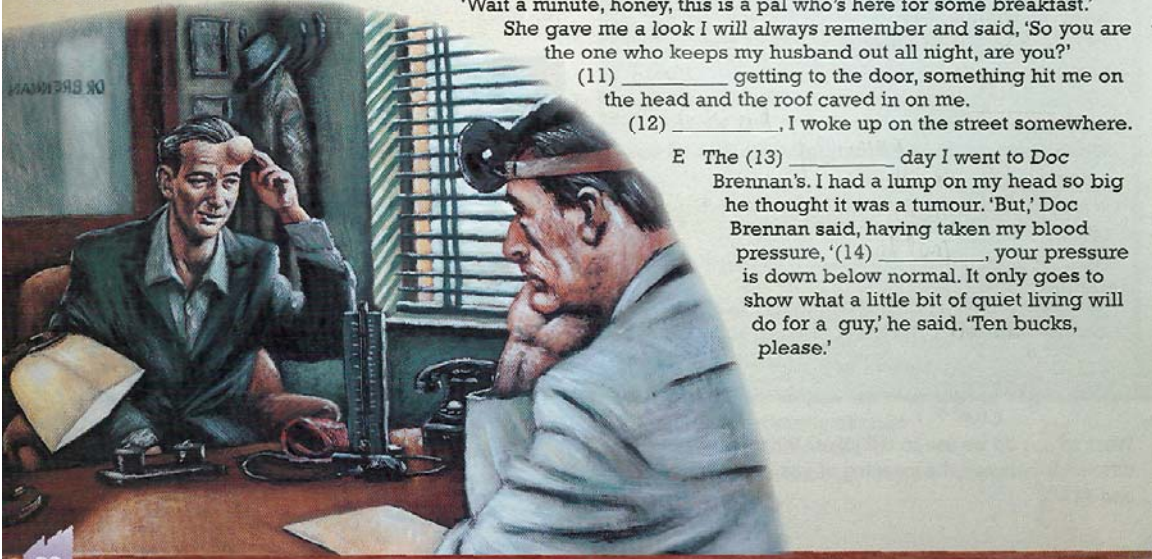
2 Complete the story with these linking words.

suddenly, following, then, when, all of a sudden, in the end, before, at last, until, after (x2), as soon as, immediately, eventually

3 Find words and expressions in the text which mean the same as the words below (paragraphs in brackets).

very high (A), to die (A), hard men (C), house (D), woman (D), to hit (D), friend (D)

What style is the story 'Blood Pressure' told in: formal, neutral or informal?



'Blood Pressure' is a short story by the American writer Damon Runyan. It is set in the shady underworld of New York in the 1920s.

- A I had never heard of my blood pressure (1) _____ I went around to see Doc Brennan about my stomach. Having examined me, he told me that my blood pressure was higher than a cat's back. I should be careful to avoid excitement, or I may pop off (2) _____ . 'A nervous man such as you must live quietly,' Doc Brennan said. "Ten bucks, please.'
- B (3) _____ leaving Doc Brennan's, I was standing in the street (4) _____ I saw Rusty Charley in front of me. I did not want anything to do with him for he was a hard guy indeed. He was known to carry a gun and sometimes shoot people if he did not like the way they wore their hats – and Rusty Charley was very critical of hats. 'Hello, Rusty,' I said, very pleasantly. 'Let's go to Nathan Detroit's dice game and win some money,' said Rusty. Of course, I had no desire to go to the dice game with Rusty Charley. As well as that, I remembered what Doc Brennan had told me and I knew there was likely to be excitement at the dice game if Rusty Charley went there. But, naturally, I was not going to argue with Charley, so we went to the game.
- C It was in a room full of smoke and there were some very tough guys around the table. I knew this was a very bad place for my blood pressure. (5) _____ we entered, all the guys looked around and (6) _____ there was a space at the table for us. Charley took the dice and bet Louie 1,000 dollars that he couldn't get a ten. (7) _____ throwing the dice into a hat, he said, 'Ten'. He didn't let anybody else look in the hat, but nobody was going to doubt that Charley had thrown a ten. (8) _____ Louie handed him over a fat note, very, very slowly.
- D Having left the game, Charley said, 'Let us go to my joint and have my wife make us some breakfast.' (9) _____, we got to his place and this red-headed doll opened the door. (10) _____, she picked up a baseball bat and smacked Charley on the head. 'Wait a minute, honey, this is a pal who's here for some breakfast.' She gave me a look I will always remember and said, 'So you are the one who keeps my husband out all night, are you?' (11) _____ getting to the door, something hit me on the head and the roof caved in on me. (12) _____, I woke up on the street somewhere.
- E The (13) _____ day I went to Doc Brennan's. I had a lump on my head so big he thought it was a tumour. 'But,' Doc Brennan said, having taken my blood pressure, '(14) _____, your pressure is down below normal. It only goes to show what a little bit of quiet living will do for a guy,' he said. "Ten bucks, please.'

3 A DESCRIPTION OF A PERSON AND PLACE (pages 36–37)

Layout

Paragraph 1

Introduce the person and the place.
Pamela is my cousin. She is in her mid thirties.

Paragraph 2

Give a general description of the house.
It's quite old and has got three spacious bedrooms.

Paragraph 3

Focus on one room in more detail.
It has got a very relaxed atmosphere and has a ...

Paragraph 4

Give a final comment on the person.
She is very independent. She is one of the most likeable ...

Style

For this type of composition, you should write in a neutral style. Below are examples of different styles.

Formal style: *The house, with numerous rooms and an extensive garden, is situated in the country. The spacious living room is ideal for entertaining guests.*

Neutral style: *She has just moved into a big house in the country with a huge garden. It's such a big house that she has lots of room for parties.*

Colloquial style: *Her new house is massive with a great big garden and loads of room for parties.*

Useful Vocabulary

Personality: → *Lexicon, page 151*

House features: *armchair, bookshelf, carpet, clock, coffee table, curtains, cushions, fireplace, lamp, lampshade, mantelpiece, mirror, painting, rug, sideboard, sofa, stove, tiles*

Describing a place/object: *cluttered (with), comfortable, cosy, covered (with), enormous, fair-sized, huge, marvellous, massive, old-fashioned, relaxing, spacious, tasteless, warm, wooden*

Linking

Result: *She is so untidy that she cannot find her computer mouse. (so + adjective + 'that' clause)*

It has got such lovely views of the countryside that it is a lovely place to be in. (such + adjective + noun + 'that' clause)

It is too big for one person to live in. (too + adjective + 'to' infinitive)

The kitchen is big enough to eat in. (adjective + enough + 'to' infinitive)

Comparison: *It is not as big as other rooms.*

The living room is a bit smaller.

It is a lot bigger than her previous house.

One of her biggest hobbies is gardening.

Giving examples: *Pamela writes for magazines, such as Vogue.*

She likes Romantic composers like Chopin, Brahms and Liszt.

She is reckless, particularly with her money!

She is sociable. For example, she often invites people round.

Checking

Layout: Have you followed the paragraph plans?

Linking: Have you included linking words and expressions?

Useful vocabulary: Have you included examples of behaviour to illustrate the personality adjectives?

4 A FILM REVIEW (pages 46–47)

Layout

Paragraph 1

Give some basic information about the film.
'Dances With Wolves' won an Oscar in 1990. It was directed by Kevin Costner.

Paragraph 2

Give a brief summary of the plot.
He is sent by the army to live on the edge of Indian territory.

Paragraph 3

Give your opinions – good and bad things about the film.
The film is very realistic in the way it shows us the everyday life of the Indians.

Paragraph 4

Conclusion and recommendation.
It is a historical film with an obvious message. It speaks to people of all ages.

Style

Most of your review should be written using present tenses:
It is set in the nineteenth century.

One day he meets an Indian.

You should aim for a neutral style, not too formal and not too colloquial.

Despite being very long, there isn't a dull moment. (neutral style)

Useful Vocabulary

It is set in the 1920s / in the sixteenth century / during the French Revolution.

It is based on a story/play/book by ...

The special effects are impressive/disappointing.

The scenery is often breathtaking with wonderful photography.

The dialogue is often excellent/weak.

X plays the part of ... / X is magnificent/unconvincing in the role of ...

Linking

Summarising the plot:

One day, Costner finds himself being watched by ...

After that, the plot begins to get complicated.

Eventually, he manages to convince the chief he is not dangerous.

In the end, they move north to Canada.

Giving examples:

There are some sad moments, especially when ...

The director pays great attention to details, such as the authentic costumes.

Contrasting:

Despite being very long, there isn't a dull moment.

I'd recommend the film for everyone, although some scenes are quite violent.

Adding points:

Their family life is very realistic. The hunting scenes are also very convincing.

The scenery is beautiful. Moreover, the background music is perfect.

Concluding:

All things considered, this is a real masterpiece.

Checking

Layout: Have you followed the suggestions for paragraphs?

Linking: Have you included a variety of linking words?

Linking words improve your writing

It is important to connect your ideas fluently. Here are some useful words and phrases.

Compare, show likeness	Also, as a comparison, similarly, in the same way
Contrast, show difference	However, but, yet, still, instead, even though, despite, nevertheless, in contrast, conversely, on the contrary, on the one hand, on the other hand, regardless of
Make a concession	Of course, although, it may appear that, possibly, another consideration
Explain	In fact, simply stated, obviously, such as, that is, put another way, significantly
Give an example	For example, more specifically, in particular, to illustrate consider, namely, including, an instance/aspect/feature/characteristic/option
Quantify	Between, approximately, more than, increasing, decreasing, a decline of, a minimum of, a peak of, a range between, considerably (remember to reference quantities)
Emphasise	Even more significant is, of major importance is the, a compelling argument is, a strong case is made by, more importantly
Connect ideas	Another, secondly, again, besides, furthermore, in addition, secondly, thirdly, as well as
Summarise ideas	As seen, on the whole, to sum up, in brief
Show cause and effect	For this reason, as a result, consequently, thus, therefore, consequently, the effect of, affected by, because
Locate	Above, below, beneath, beyond, closer, elsewhere, farther, nearby, opposite, local, regional, national, worldwide
Time	Now, today, at the present time, as soon as, before, after, in the meantime, meanwhile, simultaneously, subsequently, until, trends, continuous, since, daily, annually, decade
Sum up	Finally, so, in conclusion, lastly, as has been discussed, as a result, because, so that

<http://www.hawkerc.act.edu.au>

Complete the following. Use: although, even though, though, nevertheless, however, in spite of, or despite.

1. The marks are high. The students level is low.
2. **Although**.....
3. It was dark. He managed to find the keys.
4. **Despite**.....
5. He got up early. He arrived late to school.
6. **However**,
7. Tim is in good shape. He doesn't get much exercise.
8.
Nevertheless,.....
9. Samira was sad. She kept smiling and having fun.
10. **in spite of**.....
11. She loves him. He treats her badly.
12. **even though**.....
13. He didn't work hard. He passed the baccalaureat exam .
14. **Despite the fact that**.....,
.....
15. Some people are fat. Others are thin.
16.
whereas.....
17. Errachidia is hot . Ifrane is cold .
18. **While**.....,
.....
19. Brahim is a good student. His brother is lazy.
20., **on the other hand**,.....
21. Fatima is economical. Her sister in extravagant.
22.
but.....

Free Advanced Exercises:

So, Though, Although and Also

In each sentence, choose the best phrase to complete the gap from the choices below (a, b, c, or d).

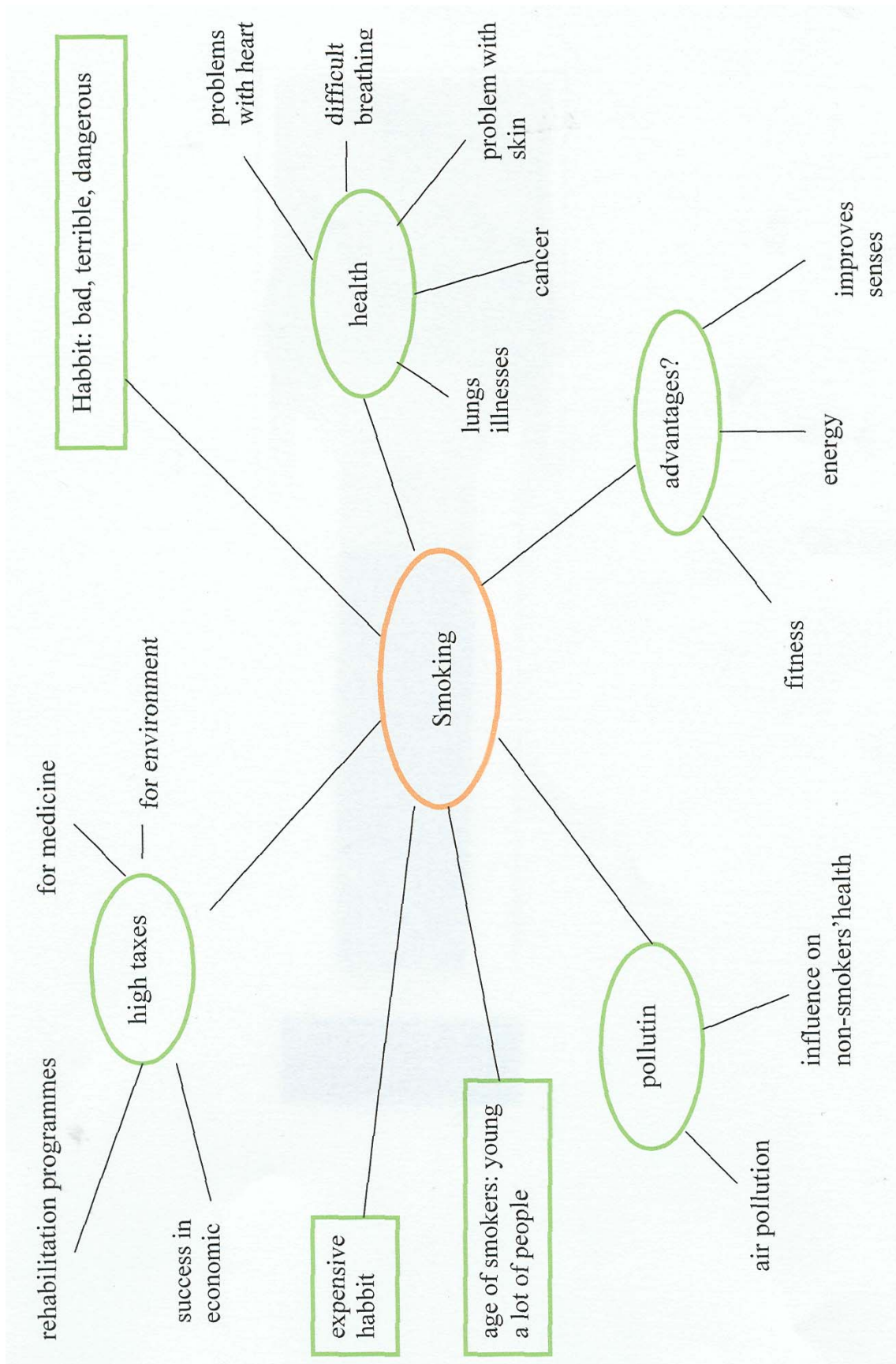
1. You'll do it because I told you _____ .
a) although b) also c) so d) though
2. I bought it even _____ I knew I couldn't really afford it.
a) also b) though c) so d) although
3. The hotel has great service, but even _____ it is still overpriced.
a) though b) although c) so d) also
4. I decided not to go out. But it would have been a good idea _____ .
a) although b) so c) also d) though
5. He's not only my boss, he's _____ a friend I can trust.
a) although b) though c) so d) also
6. We'd wanted to go to Greece for ages, _____ last year we finally went and of course, we had a great time.
a) though b) although c) so d) also
7. I'd love to have a drink with you. Not now _____ .
a) though b) although c) so d) also
8. You are just _____ predictable. I knew you'd say that.
a) though b) although c) so d) also
9. The farm, _____ big, is easy to manage.
a) though b) although c) so d) also
10. "You suggested that we all went there." - "You're right. _____ I did."
a) So b) Also c) Though d) Although
11. _____ we'd promised not to, we ended up eating all the food in the fridge.
a) So b) Also c) Though d) Although
12. _____ , what have you been getting up to lately?
a) So b) Also c) Though d) Although

<http://school.obec.go.th/watkokhad/english>

http://www.languageproject.co.uk/free_exercises/

Diagram:” Should smoking be banned?”





Should smoking be banned?

I know a lot of people who smoke. And they all have tried to give up smoking many times. Why? That means that they don't like smoking, but really smoking is so bad? Should we banned it?

Firstly, if smoking won't have place in future, our government loses a lot of money from taxes. For example in Latvia taxes for smoking is too high and gives some money to our country. Secondly, if government stopped producing cigarettes, people would buy cigarettes in other countries and sell them in ours. Of course, it would be illegal. So, if humans make illegal things they're unhappy, but government must make us happy. Yes, if smoking will be banned, many people would be unhappy. This can be third negative point which is against for smoking banning.

But if we couldn't buy cigarettes we wouldn't smoke so much. Of course, this would make our health better. Heart diseases or lung cancer would be rare illnesses. This is a positive side of stopping smoking. If people won't need much medicine government doesn't spend so much money on medical treatment. We can use that money to help poor people or build highquality

roads, or help our country to get out from crisis. We know that smoking is an expensive habit. Cigarettes are not cheap. So people would save some money for hobbies, travelling, food, or other things. Humans would go to the cinema more times, buy new clothes than before giving up smoking.

In my opinion, smoking is a bad habit. All things considered I think, that government should banned smoking and after few years people ~~sm~~ wouldn't smoke at all.

Dmitrijs Trizna, Form 11

Should Smoking Be Banned?

Smoking is one of the most popular problems in the world. It's difficult to understand why some of us smoke, but many of us like it very much. Smoking is a habit which became popular in recent days.

I think that smoking is a very big problem, because this hobby makes us ill. For someone it's just relax or a game. We don't know what smoking do with our organism. Whereas many people die, because smoking kill them.

I think that it is very difficult to do, but smoking must be banned, because it causes death.

I will never smoke and I can't understand people who are smoking, for me it's not interesting. I want to be a person who has a family and is lucky in life, but not person who poisoned the body with smoke.

Selena Juszejwa Form 11

Should smoking be banned?

Some years ago smoking was like a fashion thing for young people in society. Now situation is changed and the most of students thinks, that smoking is a very nasty habit, moreover, it is very expensive too. I know some people who smoke like a chimney, but in my family no one is smoking now. My grandfather have smoked for 40 years, but when he got it, he stop.

In my opinion, there is only one good point of smoking - money. An government will receive money from taxes on cigarettes. Whereas received money from taxes can be important for economic of the country. However, many people want to give up smoking because they have enough money to buy cigarettes. According to the last surveys, 300 people of them are die every day in the UK as a result of smoking, many of them are young smokers. Even though they know the dangers, many people still smoke. Therefore, they had problems with lungs. Cancer is one of the most dangerous result of smoking. The more cigarettes you smoke in a day, and the longer you smoke, the higher risk of lung cancer. If you smoke the risk of contracting mouth cancer is four times higher than for a non-smokers, also smoking has influence on blood pressure.

Smoking stains your teeth and gums. Children, who grow up at home where one or both parents smoke have the risk of getting asthma. Problems with health, which are caused by smoking are very terrible.

All things considered, I believe that smoking will be banned, because I don't want that my relations or friends died from smoking. On average, each cigarette shortens smoker's life about 11 minutes. I think, that better is to be a good looking person with excellent health, than be cool because you are smoking.

Veronika Andžāne, Form 11.

WRITING

General description

There are ten tests in writing.

All of them relate closely to the topics in the Coursebook Modules and additionally, they are based on the Writing Helps which are provided in the Coursebook. The writing tests aim to offer students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use their written language skills effectively.

Task types

The following task types are covered:

- 1 writing a story
- 2 writing a narrative
- 3 writing a formal letter
- 4 writing a report
- 5 writing a description of a place

- 6 writing a description of oneself
- 7 writing a personal letter

Assessment

Altogether, there are 20 points to gain in each test. The criteria for assessment include:

- 1 range of vocabulary and structures used (5 points maximum)
- 2 organisation, linking and register (5 points maximum)
- 3 coverage of points and presentation of ideas (5 points maximum)
- 4 relevance to topic, handwriting, spelling (5 points maximum)

The specific criteria are shown on the next page.

Mark (Pts)	Vocabulary and Structures	Organisation and Linking	Presentation and Register	Coverage of Points
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide range of structure and vocabulary demonstrating control of language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear organisation with a variety of linking devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation and register wholly appropriate to purpose and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full coverage of points required
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good range of structure and vocabulary, generally accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective organisation, suitable linking devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation and register appropriate to purpose and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coverage of points required with sufficient detail
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate range of structure and vocabulary, some errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate organisation, simple linking devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation and register on the whole appropriate to purpose and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coverage of main points required
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of structure and vocabulary rather limited, errors may obscure communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inconsistent organisation, few linking devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unsuccessful attempts at appropriate presentation and register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some omissions and/or irrelevant material
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrow range of structure and vocabulary, little or no language control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of organisation and linking devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little or no awareness of appropriate presentation and register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numerous omissions and/or considerably irrelevant material

Situations for discussion

Read the task and be ready to discuss following situations or answer questions. You can make notes during the discussion.

What punishments should be invented for the following descriptions of crimes.

1. Terrorist acts such as murder and bombing;
2. Burglary, when people break into a house and steal things;
3. Killing people by accidents:
 - when a pedestrian is innocent in the accident or conversely;
 - when a driver has drunk alcohol;
4. Shoplifting: people steal things in shops;
5. Kidnapping: stealing children and asking money for their return;

Prepare answers for following questions

6. Would you support death penalty and in which situations?
7. Which of sentences should stop crime?
8. Were you or your friends punished and why?
9. There was a meeting with police officers. What did you ask about?
10. Would you like to work in judge? Why?

Have you seen these people?

Jane Peters, aged 21

Jane was walking to college with a friend. The friend went back to her flat because she had forgotten something and Jane walked on alone. She never arrived at college and she has not been seen for the last five years. CCTV film of some shops near the college shows Jane talking to a man on the afternoon that she disappeared. None of her friends can identify the man. Several young women have disappeared in that area, and police and her family and friends are very concerned about her.

Jane is of slim build and blonde. When she was last seen, she was wearing a blue anorak, red pullover and jeans. She was carrying a green carrier bag, with her books in it.

Arthur Sugden, aged 61

Arthur went to get a newspaper at the local corner shop and never came back. He has been missing for seven years. His wife Pru says he had problems at work but for him to just walk out like that was 'completely out of character'. It is thought that Mr Sugden had money worries and police believe he had been gambling. Mrs Sugden and the couple's daughters Sheila, now aged 32, and Jeanette, 28, appeal to Mr Sugden to come back. 'Whatever the problem is, we can put it right together,' says Mrs Sugden.

Mr Sugden is of medium build and has thinning brown hair. When last seen he was wearing a tweed jacket, grey trousers and a white shirt with a red tie.

Richard (Dickie) Gallagher, aged 5

Last summer, Dickie Gallagher was playing on the beach on the family holiday in Corfu when he suddenly disappeared. The police searched the beach and interviewed people at nearby hotels. Coastguards searched the sea for two days after he disappeared. They believe that if Dickie had drowned the body would have been found by now. His older brother Leon, aged 12, was looking after Dickie while his parents went back to their hotel for a sleep. Dickie climbed over a wall and when Leon went to look for him he was gone. No tourists on the beach remember seeing him on his own. Mr Tom Gallagher, a driver with British Rail, has given up his job to return to Corfu. The family are preparing to sell their house to raise money to help in the search for Dickie.

Dickie Gallagher has dark hair and when last seen he was wearing black swimming trunks.



CCTV = closed-circuit television-cameras that record what happens in a particular area, e.g. in the street or in a shop.

corner shop = a small shop – not a supermarket

Corfu = a Greek island popular with British holidaymakers

First reading. True or false?

Jane Peters

- 1 Jane and her friend walked to college together. _____
- 2 Jane disappeared five years ago. _____
- 3 Jane and her friend were on the CCTV film, talking to a man. _____
- 4 Jane is not the first person to disappear in the area. _____







Arthur Sugden

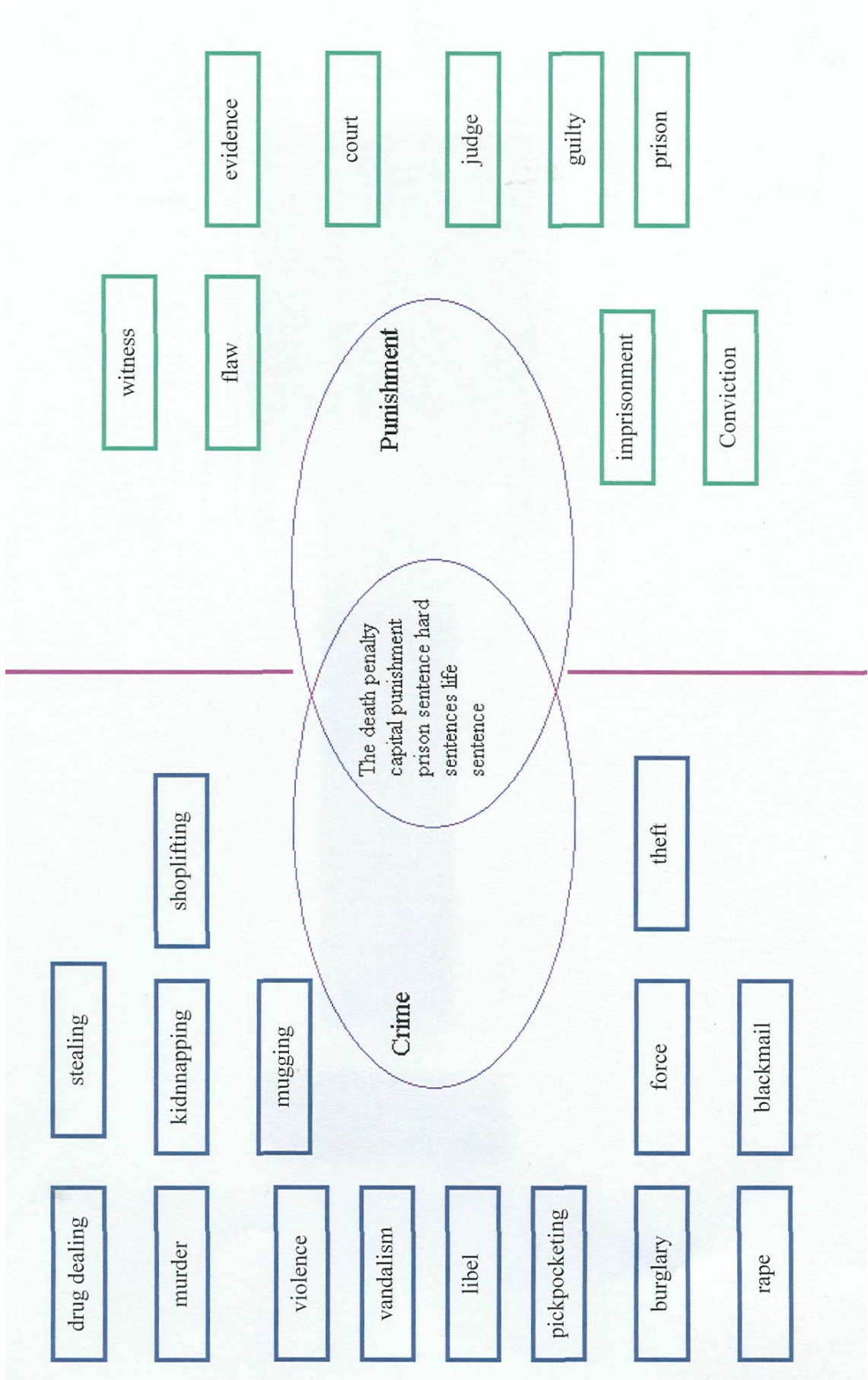
- 1 Mrs Sugden thought Arthur was coming back from the corner shop. _____
- 2 Arthur's family thought he might disappear. _____
- 3 Nobody knows exactly why Arthur disappeared. _____
- 4 Mrs Sugden still hopes that her husband will come back. _____

Richard (Dickie) Gallagher

- 1 Dickie disappeared near his home. _____
- 2 Coastguards searched the sea for Dickie. _____
- 3 The last person to see Dickie was his brother Leon. _____
- 4 Dickie's parents were on the beach when he disappeared. _____

Second reading. Which of these pictures best fits the descriptions of the missing people?

Jane Peters	Arthur Sugden	Dickie Gallagher
1 	3 	5 
2 	4 	6 



"The only way to cut crime in our country is to make punishment more severe."

In last few years, crime has been going up. There are many reasons for this situation. One of the reasons for this is possibly the fact that many people can't find work in our country. Another reason is that economic crisis in Latvia. Because of this many people have no money for living.

Many people feel, that harder sentences should be brought back. Because people do not see other ways of stopping crime.

Recent research has shown that crime has gone up. There are crimes like burglary, robbery, shoplifting and murder. Therefore, criminals should be punished with harder sentences. And the government should protect people and their rights.

There are some negative points of use of harder sentences. Nowadays prisons are full of criminals and bad conditions. Moreover, many criminals feel, that they are alone and this word and nobody can help them. So the government should to work on programmes for criminal who left prisons. They should have a place for staying in money for the beginning a new life and support from their relatives, specialists and society.

I think that harder sentences will not improve the situation with criminals. They do not stop doing crime if they will be punished in this way. Our government should think not about punishment but about improving people life, their conditions and moreover, to give people chance to get money not by robbery, but from work.

Kona Kormilova.

Questionnaire N1

Please fill in the following questionnaire, tick the appropriate answer or give your own answer where it is needed. Your answers will help the teacher to find ways of developing your writing skills more efficiently.

1. What do you like the most in learning English?

- Reading
- Speaking
- Grammar
- Writing

2. Do you think of yourself as a writer?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

3. Can you generate lots of words fairly quickly and freely?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

4. What linking words do you use?

.....

.....

5. What genre in writing is the most difficult for you?

- a letter
- a report
- an essay

6. How do you like working on a task?

- Collaboratively with a small group
- Individually
- With a partner

7. Do you write a draft first?

- Yes
- No

- Do not know
- 8. Do you use a vocabulary or Internet help during writing?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not know
- 9. Do you make any changes after the teacher's correction?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not know
- 10. Do you need the teacher's help in developing your writing skills?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Do not know

Thank you!

Some questions were taken from the Writing skills questionnaire in the Internet:
<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/mary.warner/Handouts/Writingskills.htm>

Questionnaire N2

Please fill in the following questionnaire, tick the appropriate answer. Your answers will help the teacher to get information about writing activities and their effectiveness in teaching and developing writing skills.

1. Did you like everyday writing activity at the beginning of the lesson?

- Yes
- No

2. What activities or tools helped you to improve the knowledge of linking words?

- The list of linking words
- The activities from the course book
- Additional tasks designed by the teacher

3. Did you write drafts of an essay?

- Yes
- No

4. What was important for you?

- Learning how to organise an essay
- Brainstorming and gathering ideas for the topic
- Reading, speaking or listening activities at the beginning of writing

5. What of the activities did you like the most?

- Work in groups, collect and present information about the topic
- Discussions about the topics
- Do rewriting and editing in your draft

Thank you!

Dokumentārā lapa

Diplomdarbs „ **Developing Writing Skills At Secondary School**” (**Rakstīšanas Prasmes Attīstīšana Vidusskolā**) izstrādāts LU Moderno valodu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autors: Svetlana Grebneva

20.05.09.

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītāja: Docente, Dr. Philol. Vita Kalbērziņa

20.05.2009.

Recenzents:

Darbs iesniegts Anglistikas nodaļā 20.05.2009.

Metodiķe:

20.05.2009.

Darbs aizstāvēts valsts gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

.....prot.Nr., vērtējums.....

Komisijas sekretāre:

